AMAZING HEROES

No. 146
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MARK GRUENWALD's Declaration of Writing *Captain America*

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Our Cover: Mark Gruenwald and Kieron Dwyer salute the hero and the symbol—Captain America. © 1988 Marvel Entertainment Group.

Editorial

Let's devote an editorial to comics.

I've never hidden my partiality for Supergirl. Her demise touched me (more than most of her stories). Were I the kind to realistically personify the four-color characters I enjoy reading, I would deem the recent Supergirl saga an insult to her memory.

The new Supergirl was as intriguing as the Superman/Wonder Woman meeting—and let me down as much. Most of it was in the execution.

Superman #21's cover does tantalize (excuse my sexism: Byrne draws nice legs), but there *was* a color error—more later—and the balloon implied Superman knew Supergirl.

In the story, Supergirl's sporadic memory was a contrivance for battle—what else is new, it's been re-re-done. Supes assumes "she doesn't have X-ray vision." What does assuming do? No explanation of *how* Luthor gave her powers (a simple "I found one of Superboy's inventions that modifies genetic structure" maybe?) or *why* she became blonde, besides to deceive the reader. In *Adventures of Superman* #444, also with a deceptive cover, Lex asserts Superboy's death, though they can't know (he disappeared in *Legion of Super-Heroes #38*; they must be assuming again). [I won't go into the double universe flaws, I only have so many picas, except the time-flow difference seemed superfluous.] The evil Kryptonians *somehow* destroy all known kryptonite—no cumbersome explanations here—but they let Luthor build defenses in the very town where they escaped from the Phantom Zone.

The three counterparts to our universe's heroes was a good touch, just so they could be killed was a bad touch. Raise your hands if you spotted the fact that Superman didn't have a face mask in part III, and the coloring error of Quex-Ul (named Quex-Ui in part II) as Superman in the same issue? The conversations in the planes is confusing, the leftover Gold K, although shown in *Action* #591, was a blatant deus ex machina. And Lex's ego as an excuse for billions of deaths makes him the worst criminal of all.

Let's leave Supergirl and, to be fair, chat about a Marvel nit: in *Amazing Spider-Man* #305, Todd McFarlane obviously had no *Queen Mary* art references. Ship and surroundings are all wrong. The Fox tries to escape in a lifeboat, which are locked in place, and had he lowered it, the *Queen* is surrounded by a rock barrier to protect it from tides, and he couldn't have escaped. Nice writing and art though.

I tell ya, it's enough to make a person take up reading books.

To be *very* fair, see page 8.

Another thing editors do, is come up with new stuff to increase your reading enjoyment. Since we get in so much great art for upcoming projects, sometimes not needing a full article, this issue starts *NEWSGallery*—a way we can show you more art with terse newscaptions (see? take out a space and create a neword).

And, since you *were* so inundated with news in last issue's *Preview Special*, although we have *new* news in *NEWSLINE*, we'll be synopsizing what's coming up in the next two months: August and September. For more details, keep pouring over that *Preview Special*.

KEVIN DOOLEY

NEXT: Don Simpson/*Megaton Man!*

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Amazing Heroes #151 (ships late September)—DC's *Invasion!* ..... **August 31**

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NEWSLINE

DC: *BATMAN* CAST; PEREZ RETURNS TO *TITANS*; ROBIN DIES?

A few things *not* in last issue:

Who will play the Batman in the movie slated to come out next year? Ready? Michael Keaton. We await your responses in *Amazing Readers*.

A brochure in a recent movie trade magazine announced *Superboy, the Series*: "The Adventures of Young Superman—a new Live-Action, Weekly Half-Hour" from ALEXANDER and ILYA SALKIND. We await your responses in *Amazing Readers*.

Now, what can we tell you that you didn't learn in the *Preview Special*? Not much, so we'll tell you what's coming up soon, like in August.

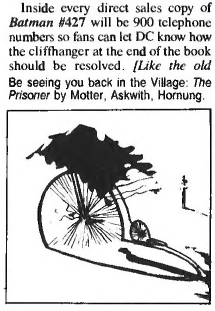
Let's start out with some big news:

GEORGE PEREZ is back on ***The New Teen Titans*** with their 50th issue. From then on he'll co-plot each issue with MARV WOLFMAN and contribute pencil breakdowns and covers. PEREZ will continue his work on ***Wonder Woman***, and there will even be a few crossover issues while DC hammers out the latest origin of **Wonder Girl**.

Following the mini-series within a series "Ten Nights of the Beast" in ***Batman*** is the four-issue "A Death in the Family," which starts in ***Batman* #426**, a double-sized issue out late August 26 for $1.50. The series is written by JIM STARLIN, drawn by JIM APARO & MIKE DECARLO, and covered by MIKE MIGNOLA.

Direct sales readers will decide a major point of contention in the story ...whether **Robin** lives or dies.

Inside every direct sales copy of *Batman* #427 will be 900 telephone numbers so fans can let DC know how the cliffhanger at the end of the book should be resolved. *[Like the old* Be seeing you back in the Village: *The Prisoner* by Motter, Askwith, Hornung.



George Perez's cover/return to *New Teen Titans*: #50. Look for drop of "Teen."

WILLIAM CASTLE movies in which the audience decided whether or not the villain should meet a fittingly cruel demise.] Only direct sales comic shops will have the books with the numbers; the plot in issues #427-428 will definitely hinge on the outcome of the telephone poll.

Already dead is **The Shadow** who met his demise in lucky *issue* #13. In August, the search for someone to lead his agents ends as another pulp hero is recruited...**The Avenger**. Series' talents ANDREW KELFER and KYLE BAKER have put together a retrospective on the **Shadow**'s career for ***The Shadow Annual* #2**, but from that point on, **The Shadow** is dead. Long live **The Avenger**.

To continue the retrospective trend DC also takes you back to The Village to meet **The Prisoner**, in a four-issue Prestige limited series. The original ***The Prisoner*** television series debuted in the late '60s and starred PATRICK MCGOOHAN. The comic returns the reader to The Village twenty years later, as another British secret agent retires without explanation and winds up on a remote island beach not far from the aging **Number Six**. DEAN MOTTER, MARK ASKWITH and DAVE HORNUNG collaborate to bring you #1 for $3.50 in August.

Action Comics Weekly will feature covers by MARY WILSHIRE (**#620**), JOE ORLANDO (**#621**), RON FRENZ & LARRY MAHLSTEDT (**#622**), and BRENT ANDERSON (**#623**). *Issue* **#623** also starts new stories with **The Phantom Stranger** and **Shazam** from the respective teams of PAUL KUPPERBERG & JOHN BEATTY and ROY THOMAS & RICK STASI.

KERRY GAMMILL starts his pencilling duty on *Superman* in August.

TY TEMPLETON guest pencils ***Justice League International* #20**.

BRIAN BOLLAND covers ***Animal Man* #4**.

And *Dragonlance* #1 starts the joint DC/TSR line based on TSR's most popular series. It's written by DAN MISHKIN with art by RON RANDALL and RANDY ELLIOT. ●

MARVEL NEWS: *INFERNO* BLAZES; BYRNE ON *WCA*

Ann Nocenti and John Bolton: travel agents to *Someplece Strange*—g.n. in August.

Hints have been dropping fast and furiously for months, and now it's finally time for *Inferno*. Thirty-two books are affected, the first ship in August with ***X-Terminators* #3**, written by LOUISE SIMONSON, art by JON BOGDANOVE; ***X-Foctor* #35**, by LOUISE SIMONSON, WALT SIMONSON, and BOB WIACEK; ***X-Men* #239**, by CLAREMONT, SILVESTRI, and GREEN; and ***Power Pack* #42**, by JON BOGDANOVE and STAN DRAKE. ***Power Pack*** also sports a cover by BOGDANOVE and HILARY BARTA. It's the very first issue in which the **Power kids** are forced to reveal their secret identities to their parents. Look for future crossovers in these titles as well as in ***Amazing Spider-Man, Web of Spider-Mon, Spectoculor Spider-Mon, Avengers***, and ***Excalibur***.

JOHN BYRNE takes over writing and pencilling duties in ***West Coast Avengers*** with #42, shipping November 1. MIKE MACHLAN will stay on as series inker, but everything else is due for a change.

"John has been discussing his plans with ***Avengers*** writer WALT SIMONSON," said HOWARD MACKIE, editor. "He and WALT will treat both teams as 'The Avengers,' allowing more interplay and causing the members to cross back and forth more freely whenever the stories demand." The core West Coast members will be: **Hawkeye, Mockingbird, The Vision, The Scarlet Witch, Wonder Man, Dr. Pym, Tigra, The Wasp**, and **Iron Man**. But . . .

BYRNE's first story will be "Vision Quest," that will lead to tragic repercussions for **The Vision, The Scarlet Witch**, and the team in general. "As usual, John is shaking things up," MACKIE added. "Since WALT is doing the same thing over in ***The Avengers***, the result will be an exciting new status quo for both teams."

New next month ***Count Duckula***, by MICHAEL GALLAGHER and WARREN KREMER, and ***Semper Fi***, by MICHAEL PALLADINO and JOHN SEVERIN. Retail price for the duck is $1.00, fang you, and the Marines take the hill for 75¢.

The ***Punisher Trade Paperback*** reprints the five-issue ***Punisher*** mini-series from 1984. It sports a new painted cover by MIKE ZECK and ZIMMELMAN.

CHARLES VESS and BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH each contribute a cover to issues of ***Marvel Comics***, and JOHN ROMITA JR. covers ***Daredevil* #261**, where the **Human Torch** fans the fires of Hell's Kitchen while covering for a wounded Hornhead.

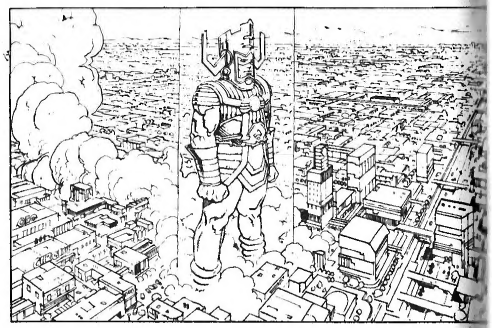
Epic Comics' expansion continues. ***Last American* #1** ships August 4. This Mature Readers story about life after a nuclear holocaust is written by JOHN WAGNER & ALAN GRANT with art by MIKE MCMAHON and retails at $1.95.

Travel to ***Someplace Strange*** with writer ANN NOCENTI and artist JOHN BOLTON: the graphic novel relates the story of three children who take a trip down the rabbit hole and find themselves faced with a real-life Bogeyman in a world very different from Wonderland. It should be on sale late August for $6.95.

STAN LEE and MOEBIUS's 2-issue ***Silver Surfer Parable*** brings **The Surfer** and **Galactus** back to earth for yet another showdown in the early 21st Century. They retail for $1.00 apiece and ship in August.

The Epic ***Incal Graphic Novel Vol. 1***, incorrectly pre-listed at $9.95, will retail value at $10.95. Each of Marvel's offset Mando format comics (that used to be $1.25) will now be $1.50. ●

Galactus makes en entrance in Stan Lee and Moebius's *Silver Surfer: The Perable*.



ECLIPSE NEWS: *BOOKS OF BLOOD*; MONTHLY *SCOUT*; WINDOW WARS

Eclipse will adapt CLIVE BARKER's chilling ***Books of Blood*** in a 3-issue mini-series featuring art by STEVE BISSETTE, STEVE HAMPTON, JOHN BOLTON, and others.

SCOTT HAMPTON will also adapt the one-shot of ROBERT E. HOWARD's "Pigeons from Hell."

Next Spring look for yet another manga: ***The Dirty Pair***.

TIM TRUMAN's ***Scout: War Shaman*** has shifted from its six-week schedule to monthly publication starting with #3 late June. "Response to the new series has been phenominal," said publisher DEAN MULLANEY.

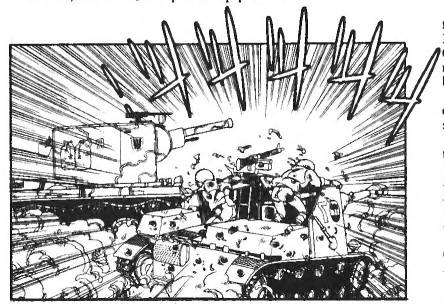
And Eclipse P.R. Rep. BEAU SMITH is not one to let a little popularity go to waste. Eclipse will be sponsoring a ***Scout*** retail window display contest for this summer. The company calls the contest "a potentially inexpensive, eyecatching, and entertaining way for comics store retailers to draw new customers to their stores and to attract new readers to one of the direct market's best-selling and most dependable titles."

Stores must, quite simply, send in photos of their ***Scout*** theme display.

Grand Prize is the original cover painting for ***Scout: War Shaman* #2**, signed and personalized by TRUMAN; *First Prize*: a painted original page from ***War Shaman* #1**, signed by the artist; *Second Prize*: ten autographed copies of ***War Shaman* #1**, five signed copies of the ***Scout: Four Monsters*** paperback, and a signed copy of the new ***Scout*** promotional poster; *Third Prize*: one personalized copy of both ***Scout: War Shaman* #1** and the ***Four Monsters*** paperback.

Life's tough for a kid the West of Tim Truman's *Scout: Wer Shaman*.

Winners will have color photographs of their storefronts published in an issue of ***Scout***, and every store that enters will have its name, address and store owners published as well. Said SMITH, "This contest is very important to TIM. TIM appreciates everything the retailers have done for him, and this is his way of saying thanks." ●



An as yet untranslated sound effect panel in *Grey* by Yoshihisa Tegemi from Viz.

VIZ GOES SOLO WITH NEW TITLES

Areo 88, The Legend of Kamui, Mai the Psychic, and ***Xenon*** are manga brought to America under the Eclipse banner. These titles are trademarks of Viz Communications, an affiliate of Shogakukan, the largest Japanese comics publisher. Beginning this fall, Viz will publish comics in America without Eclipse.

The first title is ***Grey*** by YOSHIHISA TAGAMI. In the 23rd century, in a society divided, in a world, "the only hope of a better life is to fight," it is the only way of life to the man called Grey Death—survival, for himself, for humanity.

Grey is translated by SATORI FUJII and GERARD JONES and lettered and touched up by DAVID CODY WEISS. The first issue, which features a forward by HARLAN ELLISON, should be on out here in October, and monthly after for nine months. It is 72 pages, deluxe square-bound selling for $2.95.

Viz will release an album of 15 original color drawings by TAGAMI, selling for $12.95.

Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind is the next title. Adapting the science fiction/fantasy animated feature, it is a story of beauty and power, of evil and the constant struggle for life. HAYAO MIYAZAKI wrote and drew the story. TOREN SMITH and DAVID LEWIS translated it. TOM ORZECHOWSKI does the lettering and touch-up art. ***Nousicaa*** is made up of several parts—part one is seven issue slong—and will be presented in deluxe, squarebound editions of 56 pages for $2.50 each.

#1 contains an original full color frontispiece by MOEBIUS. Book one, containing a bonus 64 pages, should be out in November.

Lum should appear next Spring.

What does this mean for the titles still published by Eclipse? The last issue of ***Mai: The Psychic Girl*** should be out as you read this. ***Xenon*** will end it's bi-weekly run with **#23**. And the others should finish up their respective runs. More information as we get it. ●

DORI SEDA MEMORIAL AWARD AT SAN DIEGO

A panel from Dori Seda's *Lonely Nights*.

Last Gasp and the Women's Comics Collective are sponsoring the First Annual Dori Seda Memorial Award for the Most Promising New Female Cartoonist and will be presented at this year's San Diego Comic Book Convention.

The voting is open to all comics industry professionals: artist, writers, editors, etc., and at least for this first year, includes Female Cartoonist who have come on the scene within the last five years.

Professionals attending the San Diego Con, which takes place August 4-7, should look for a ballot in their pro-pack they receive at the door. Or ask for one at the Last Gasp table or contact JACKIE ESTRADA.

The nominees are:

ALISON BECHDEL—whose work includes ***Dykes to Watch Out For, Gay Comix, Strip AIDS USA***, and ***Wimmen's Comix***,

ANGELA BOCAGE—who had done work in ***Gay Comix, Renegade Romance, Strip AIDS USA***, and ***Wimmen's Comix***,

COLLEEN DORAN—who has done ***A Distant Soil, Fortune's Friends, Who's Who in the Legion***, and ***Strip AIDS USA***,

CYNTHIA MARTIN—whose art has appeared in ***Spider-Man, Renegade Romance, Star Wars***, and ***Wimmen's Comix***,

CAROL TYLER—who has had her work in ***Weirdo, Strip AIDS USA***, and ***Wimmen's Comix***.

The award will be presented at the Women in Comics panel, Sunday the 7th at 1 PM.

If you are a professional, but will *not* be attending the San Diego Con, you can send an absentee ballot by no later than July 25, 1988 to:

TONA Award
1982 5th Street
San Francisco, CA 94114

Please be sure to include your name and credits.

And for those of you are late, you can send it to:

San Diego Comic Con
Attn: Jackie Estrada
c/o TONA Award
P.O. Box 17066
San Diego, CA 92117 —*KD*

MATRIX MEETS CROC

Matrix Graphics Series recently merged with Ludcom Inc., a Canadian publishing company known for its humor magazine ***CROC***, to form a new publishing division to be known as Matrix Comics.

MARK SHAINBLUM, founder of Matrix, has run the company alone since 1984, when he broke into the market with ***New Triumph Featuring Northguard #1***, "but when some of the early distributors closed down we sustained heavy losses. The cash flow problem wreaked havoc on our schedules and there was no money to spend on proper advertising." The new financial resources available through Ludcom and ***CROC*** should help SHAINBLUM produce many of the quality titles that were beyond his reach before the merger. He now also has access to a permanent staff of some twenty people to help get the books out on time.

CROC publisher JACQUES HURTUBISE is confident that the comic book direct sales market will continue to grow through the next several years, so, according to merge engineer PIERRE FOURNIER, "It seemed to me that Matrix and ***CROC*** could benefit one another." And now, "The plan is to establish ourselves as contenders, that means good books, on schedule . . . We want the distributors and the retailers (and, of course, the readers) on our side." ●

Dinos comin' at ya. *3-D Zone Presents*.

3-D ZONE SELF PUBS

Fans of wearing cardboard glasses while they read will note RAY ZONE is now publishing his visual delights himself. Here's a run-down of info on upcoming issues:

—September: ALEX RAYMOND's 30-page Flash Gordon story "The Water World of Mongo" is in the regular ***3-D Zone*** comic issue **#13**.

Also out that month is ***3-D Paperdolls*** with TRINA ROBBINS, who has adeptly kept cut-outs alive in her *California Girls*. The book contains two figures and six pages of costumes and accessories all with a "Hollywood" theme. It's a 9" x 12" format, 8 pages, $2.95 with 3-D glasses bound in (but no 3-D scissors).

—October: issue **#14** of ***The 3-D Zone*** has "Tyranostar King of the Dinosaurs" by PETER VON SHOLLY and MIKE VAN CLEVE. It ships with 4-D glasses; the 4th "d" stands for their shape: dinosaurs. The cover is by BIL STOUT.

—November: "3-Dementia Comics" in ***3-DZ* #15**. —December: in ***3-DZ* #16** is DAVE STEVENS and BRUCE JONES's "Space Vixens." —January 1989's ***3-DZ* #17** has "Cracked Classics. —February: **#18** has "Thrilling Love 3-D." —March: BASIL WOLVERTON's "Spacehawk" gets 3-Ded in **#19**. —April: "Commander Battle and His Atomic Submarine" in **#20**. —May: **#21** has "The Deep, Deep Space" by STEVE VANCE. Promised art includes JACK DAVIS, HARVEY KURTZMAN, and BILL WARD.

Starting in October will be a series of black-and-white one shots. KIM DEITCH's ***No Business Like Show Business***, about pigs in a circus, originally said to be ***3-DZ* #15** will be the first, followed by ***Hoodoo*** by MARY FLEENER in November, ***American Primitive*** by THE PIZZ in January '89, and ***Zomoid Illustories*** in February. ●

ADVERTISEMENT ADVERTISEMENT ADVERTISEMENT

ECLIPSE COMICS TOP OF THE NEWS PAGE 9

Page 9 © 1988 Eclipse Enterprises

Retailers Win Big In *Scout* Contest

Window Displays Lead To Higher Profits, Prizes

Eclipse Comics has announced that it will be sponsoring a *Scout* window display contest slated for the summer months. The contest is planned as a potentially inexpensive, eyecatching, and entertaining way for comics store retailers to draw new customers to their stores and to attract new readers to one of the direct market's best-selling and most dependable titles.

Prizes will include signed original artwork from the *Scout: War Shaman* series, quantities of signed, exclusive *Scout* merchandise, and free national advertising for all participating stores.

The contest was conceived by sales representative Beau Smith and *Scout* creator Timothy Truman after they received reports of the success of a *Scout* window display at Comic World, 1204 4th Ave., Huntington, West Virginia.

Kathleen Miller, owner of the store, explains, "I had a guy paint a great ol' big sign, probably about three feet wide by two and a half feet tall of the *Scout* logo. The sign had a red background and blue letters. I hung that in the middle, and put back issues of the old *Scout* series all around it, and the new series [*Scout: War Shaman*] underneath it in two rows.

"Everybody loves my windows," says Miller, who changes the displays every two to three weeks. A previous window featured Dave Stevens' Valkyrie poster on a royal blue background, surrounded by back issues of *Airboy*.

Scout's science fiction and adventure slant lends itself well to imaginative window displays. "I'm really anxious to see what our friends in the retail stores come up with," says Truman. "I'm particularly interested in seeing how they interpret the series to fit the market in their particular area."

"An attractive window display in an attractive store is one way to get new customers interested and inside. Once they come in," says Smith, "they're going to find something they like."

Winners will have colour photographs of their storefronts printed in an upcoming issue of *Scout: War Shaman*, and every store that enters will have its name and location, and the names of its owners, published in the nationally distributed *Scout: War Shaman*.

To enter, retailers need only design and set up their *Scout: War Shaman* window display and send Eclipse three colour or black and white photographs of the display by August 15, 1988. Winners will be chosen by Truman, Smith, and *War Shaman* editor Cat Yronwode. "What we'll be looking for is imagination and how likely we think the display would be to draw new customers inside," says Smith.

The address for entries is Eclipse Comics, P.O. Box 1099, Forestville, CA 95436.

PRIZES

Grand Prize: the beautiful original cover painting for *Scout: War Shaman* #2
First Prize: a painted original art page from *Scout: War Shaman* #1
Second Prize: ten autographed copies of *Scout: War Shaman* #1, five signed copies of the *Scout: The Four Monsters* paperback, as well as a copy of the new *Scout: War Shaman* poster, autographed and personalized by Truman.
Third Prize: one personalized copy each of both *Scout: War Shaman* #1 and the *Four Monsters* paperback.

New York: Year Zero

Barreiro, Zanotto Create Corrupt Future City

Originally printed in Argentina and Italy, the acclaimed *New York: Year Zero* makes its English debut this July in a three-part mini-series from Eclipse International.

Earth is at interplanetary war with Venus, when the Terran forces are forced to retreat. Returning to earth, Chester Bryan is stripped of his guns, his boots, and his supplies, and left in New York City—a corrupt and hellish nightmare.

"[It's] very inspirational," says *Scout: War Shaman* creator Timothy Truman of Barreiro and Juan Zanotto's hard-hitting drama of an apocalyptic future. "I'm real fond of that particular series."

Writer Barreiro has crafted a tightly paced action adventure that recalls the best of recent "day after" nuclear horror films, while the artwork of Zanotto most closely brings to mind the incredible detail of Jorge Zaffino's *Winter World*. "There's no other comic I know of that's quite like it," says publisher Dean Mullaney.

"When fans say they want the best that Europe and South America have to offer, *New York: Year Zero* is really the sort of stuff they're talking about," says sales representative Beau Smith.

"These guys ain't afraid to tell a story," says Smith, "and art fans won't want to tear their eyes off the pages."

Like the sell-out first issue of *Aces*, Smith anticipates strong reader reaction to the series. "Of course, *New York: Year Zero* is in a comic book rather than magazine format, but I think we'll attract more mainstream readers that way," he says.

"With a strong turn toward non-Japanese material, Eclipse International is breaking new ground in our quest to bring our readers the best comics from every continent," Mullaney says. "The best stuff, I hope, is still to be found."

New York: Year Zero #1 ships July 12. The monthly deluxe black and white mini-series retails for $2.00.

THIS IS FIT TO PRINT NUMBER 215

Heading this time by DICK CONNOLLY.
To see YOUR name in boldface type and your art or lettering here, make FtP logos 8 1/2 inches wide by 3 inches deep and send 'em to catherine yronwode, p.o. box 1099, forestville, california 95436

FIT TO PRINT IS COPYRIGHT 1988 CATHERINE YRONWODE

Cal Girls Receive New Promo Push

Marvel's *Misty* Readers Targeted By Mass Mailing

Retailers can expect an influx of new readers for Trina Robbins' *California Girls* when a mass mailing to almost 1000 fans of her Marvel comic, *Meet Misty*, goes out later this month.

Meet Misty and *California Girls* are both about normal kids, with readers sending in clothing designs and Robbins choosing a Designer of the Month in every issue. *California Girls* also features paperdolls and colouring contests.

In its six-issue run, *Meet Misty* received an incredible mountain of mail, and creator Robbins saved as many letters as she could. Now each of those *Misty* fans will be finding a free *California Girls* comic in his or her mailbox.

"*Meet Misty* was sold in comic book stores, at newstands, and in all sorts of other stores, but *California Girls* is only sold in comic book stores and in Waldenbooks," explains editor Letitia Glozer in the letter accompanying the comic.

"I hope that the free sample and letter will send many of *Misty*'s newsstand readers into a comic book shop in search of *California Girls*," Glozer says. "There is a young female readership that is rarely served by the current comics marketplace. I think that should change."

California Girls is in the deluxe black and white format and retails for $2.00.

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ECLIPSE COMICS TOP OF THE NEWS PAGE 10

Page 9 © 1988 Eclipse Enterprises

New *Fast Fiction* Debuts With *She*

Classic Stories Retold In Graphic Art Form

H. Rider Haggard's classic adventure tale *She*, illustrated by Vincent Napoli, inaugurates Eclipse's *Fast Fiction* line of literary adaptations in July.

Originally published by Seaboard in 1949, *She* is the best of the original Fast Fiction series, and is known to many collectors as the finest of the adaptations of Haggard's novel. The cover is by H.C. Kiefer.

Written in 1885, *She* is a mysterious adventure set in darkest Africa. 2000 years ago, She, the White Queen of Kor, murdered her lover Kallikrates in a jealous rage. She lives forever through a rejuvenating fire. Although her lover is dead, his descendants have been charged with avenging his murder.

Leo Vincey, one of the descendants, goes to find the White Queen, who, believing him to be Kallikrates rejuvenated, drugs him into insensibility and takes him to her mountain palace.

Born in 1856, Haggard was to write 28 popular novels before his death in 1925. His first, *King Solomon's Mines*, began when he complained to his brother that anyone could write a novel as well as Robert Louis Stevenson. His brother challenged Haggard to prove it, and six weeks later a popular classic had been born.

King Solomon's Mines was quickly followed by the even more successful *She*, which also produced a sequel entitled *Ayesha*. Both *She* and *King Solomon's Mines* have been kept continuously in print, selling millions of copies.

Haggard's talent has been acclaimed by many writers. "H. Rider Haggard—an immortal!" said Henry James.

Lin Carter wrote that "Haggard, a born storyteller with brilliant narrative gifts, had been lucky enough to have lived in Africa, and could depict the landscape and the natives with such authenticity of atmosphere and detail of setting as to capture the imagination of his generation."

The illustrated *Fast Fiction* version of *She* reprints art as excellent as the story. "Napoli's art is so much better than the static and dry Classic Illustrated style," says publisher Dean Mullaney. "Napoli brings life, verve, and dramatic composition to the tale."

The 56 page graphic album retails for $5.95 and features new tone work for this black and white edition.

Poster Celebrates Ten Years

Over 170 Top Eclipse Characters Are Featured

To help celebrate its tenth anniversary, Eclipse has commissioned a special commemorative poster featuring over 170 top characters from the company's first ten years of publishing. Pencilled by Stan Woch and Mark Johnson and inked by Tom Yeates, the assemblage reflects the diversity of projects with which Eclipse has been involved.

Every star from every regular series, graphic novel, back-up, and mini-series will find his, her, or its way onto the 34 by 22 inch poster.

"Sabre, Scout, Miracleman, Airboy, Valkyrie, and the rest of the Airfighters will all be there, but so will The Scythe, Scorpio Rose, and Static," says distribution manager Sean Deming.

"We thought it was important to step back after ten years and take a look at all the characters whose creators have helped make Eclipse the leading independent publisher today," Deming says.

The back of the poster will feature a key to all the characters, to help fans who who have more recently joined the ranks of Eclipse readers.

"It had been suggested that we have a contest to see who could correctly identify every character," says Deming. "But we quickly realized that since, as a creator-owned company, we needed to include every character's individual trademark and copyright on the poster, the answers would be right there for everyone to see!"

Deming says that the poster, which will be the same size as the Dave Stevens poster series, will feature state of the art laser-scanned colour; extra heavy, glossy coated paper stock; and precision offset printing on an eight-colour press with heavy metal plates.

"This is a gorgeous piece—a worthy tenth anniversary collectable," he says.

The full-colour poster is scheduled to ship July 26. It retails for $8.95.

FIT TO PRINT

by Cat Yronwode

THIS IS FIT TO PRINT NUMBER 216: The Virginia creeper leaves press so flatly against the window panes that I can hardly see the sky.

WHO'S WHO: This one is for Jerry Bails, affectionately known as "the father of comics fandom." Jerry is the compiler of the most massive comics research project ever undertaken, the "Who's Who in American Comics," a computer database in which he and his colleagues strive to list complete credits for every writer and artist who has ever worked in the comics industry.

Because many people come and go in this business (some to further fame, some to utter obscurity), Jerry also attempts to track the NON-comics work of the comic book creators. For instance, if Artist X quit *Captain Gleeful* in 1962 to design balloons for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, Jerry has that information on file. If Writer Y supplemented his comics income by scripting an Oscar-winning Hollywood screenplay, Jerry can tell you all about it.

Helping Jerry accumulate this kind of data can become a strange hobby in and of itself. It's a game I really like to play. The only way to "win" is to send Jerry some information he doesn't already have. I think I can safely say I have found some.

So, Jerry, get out your file cards. This is new stuff:

Thomas Yeates, in addition to his many art credits at Marvel, Eclipse, and DC, is a producer and director of cable video programs.

I know, 'cause I just saw two of them.

The first was an hour-long show about the city of Santa Rosa, California, and its seeming inability to take care of its waste without dumping it into the Russian River or the Pacific Ocean. There was a dignified panel discussion in which alternatives to river discharge and ocean outfall were discussed, an in-the-field interview with a farmer who wanted to use the highly treated water for irrigation, and a sing-along staged by a crew of county residents opposed to sewage in the river. The lyrics, to the tune of Johnny Horton's "Sink the Bismark," referred in passing to Yeates' art work on the "Manure Man" episode in *Airboy* #25 which introduced real-life environ-mental guerrilla Tom Lynch, in his Manure Man persona, to the comics world:

Superman or Batman,
Airboy or The Heap
Couldn't save the little town
Toward which the sewage creeped;
Then little Tommy Lynch spoke up,
His voice so very grand,
"There's only one can help you now—
"That's Manure Man!"

The second show was about logging, and it dealt with claims by area residents that the California Department of Forestry allows certain large logging companies to circumvent State-regulated environmental practices when clear-cutting stands of old-growth forest. In addition to a hotly argued debate between a logging company forester, a CDF bureaucrat, and two environmentalists, we also got some incredible aerial shots of clear-cut Redwood forests, and a quick lesson in the geology of erosion. All in all, it was a hard-hitting program, very well organized and reported.

Thomas tells me it took about two weeks to write, direct, and edit each hour-long show, and that, time permitting, he'll be doing it again some day. Right now, though, he's back at the drawing board, working on the graphic docu-drama, *Brought to Light*.

You got that all written down, Jerry? Good.

Heading this time by MARTIN ANDERSON.
To see YOUR name in boldface type and your art or lettering here, make FtP logos 8 1/2 inches wide by 3 inches deep and send 'em to catherine yronwode, p.o. box 1099, forestville, california 95436

FIT TO PRINT (C)COPYRIGHT 1988 CATHERINE YRONWODE

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WATCHMEN SMILES THROUGH THE HARVEY AWARDS; *CONCRETE* BEST NEW

Well, the *Watchmen* didn't win *every* award available, but series writer ALAN MOORE and artists BRIAN BOLLAND & JOHN HIGGINS *did* make off with the lion's share of the glory at the First Annual Harvey Awards Presentation. The Harveys, presented at this year's Chicago Comic Book Convention, recognize excellence in the field of comic book production as seen by industry professionals.

The event was sponsored by Fantagraphics Books, Lone Star Comics, and the Eastern Region Comic Book Retailers Association. The "Harvey" name was adopted as a tribute to the great HARVEY KURTZMAN, whose work has had a tremendous influence in the field of comics, and whose talent, no doubt, inspired some of the recipients of the award. And so . . . the winners of the 1988 Harvey Awards are:

Watchmen and its creators won 7 Harveys; Paul Chadwick's *Concrete* won New Series.

Best Continuing or Limited Series: . . . . *Watchmen*
Best Single Issue: . . . . *Watchmen* #9
Best New Series: . . . . *Concrete*
Best Writer: . . ALAN MOORE, for *Watchmen*
Best Artist or Penciller: DAVE GIBBONS, for *Watchmen*
Best Cartoonist (Writer/Artist): PAUL CHADWICK, for *Concrete*
Best Graphic Album: . . . . *Watchmen*
Best Inker: AL WILLIAMSON, for *Daredevil*
Best Letterer: KEN BRUZENAK, for *American Flagg!*
Best Colorist: JOHN HIGGINS, for *Watchmen*
Excellence in Production: . . . . *Watchmen*
Best American Edition of Foreign Material: . . . . *Moebius*
Best Reprint Project: . . . . *The Spirit*

And the newest inductees into the Jack Kirby Hall Of Fame are HARVEY KURTZMAN and ROBERT CRUMB. —BMW

Rabbit meets Turtle in *Usagi Yojimbo* #10.

THE TOPS IN COMICS

If it wasn't for *Batman: The Cult* and *Spider-Man* the entire top ten listing from Capital City's June Dealers Newsletter would all be mutant-oriented. The first regular issue of *Excalibur* was #1. #2 was *X-Men Annual* #12, then the first issue of the *X-Terminators*, *X-Men*, the regular title #s 235 & 236 right after each other, which interestingly was followed by two issue of *Marvel Comics Presents*: #s 4 and 5, which contain Wolverine stories. JIM STARLIN and BERNI WRIGHTSON's *The Cult* came in at #8, then *X-Factor* #33, and *Amazing Spider-Man* #306. The other mutant titles *Classic X-Men* #26 and *Alpha Flight* #63 registered at #s 23 and 36 respectively. The first non-DC or non-Marvel title was the Archie Comics adaptation of the TV show: *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Adventures*. The second non-DC or Marvel is *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* #16. As a matter in passing, the first Fantagraphics Books is STAN SAKAI's *Usagi Yojimbo* #10 in which guest stars one of the TMNT.

The following first issues all were in the top 50: *Cloak and Dagger* third #1, STEVE DITKO's *Speedball* at #34, DC's *Starman* at *Hawk and Dove* at #42, and DC's *Haywire* at #55.

Lastly, if one was to buy every comic on the Capital City list, it would cost you $1,021.98. Just put it on my Platinum AMEX. ●

AH MANGELS REVIEWS

There was an unfortunate mistake in the *Comics In Review* section of *Amazing Heroes* #144. Pages 80-82 are not in the correct order. They should be (as numbered) #81-82-80.

The staff would like to apologize to ANDY MANGELS, who authored the article, as the mix-up lends a certain incoherence to the affected reviews. ●

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NEWS *Gallery*

Dave Stevens's cover *Lust in the Dust* due out in September.

Above: There's no running from Paul Fricke and Scott Beaderstadt's *Trollords*—now at Comico. Below: the third issue of *Tales From The Heart* by Cindy Goff and Rafael Nieves, which should be coming out in November from Slave Labor.

Splash from Stan Sakai's *Usagi Yojimbo* #12: "The Shogun's Gift."

COMING DISTRACTIONS!

ADVENTURE PUBL.

☐ **ADVENTURERS BOOK II #6**
The Adventurers make it out of the Angore jungle, and Sulter must finally kill a religious heretic.
Story ..... **Den Greenberg**
Art ..... **Burlee & Stilee**
Cover ..... **Sherri Ives**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **DEATH HAWK #3**
Death Hawk joins forces with R'yex and Vanessa on a mission to an unexplored world.
Story ..... **Mark Ellis**
Art ..... **Levin & McKinnon**
Cover ..... **Dave Dorman**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **NETHERWORLD #1-2**
Loneliness, magic, and the end of the world combine in a tale of construction and destruction in the late 1990's.
Story ..... **Mark Ellis**
Art ..... **Gabriel Morrisette**
Cover ..... **Iain McCaig**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **WARRIORS #7**
The Shadolok storyline concludes in an exciting *Adventurer Book II* tie-in. Plus, a story on Tirien—before he died.
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

AMERICAN SPLENDOR

☐ **AMERICAN SPLENDOR #13**
"From off the streets of Cleveland" Harvey Pekar provides a real 'slice of life' that is definitely not Wonder Bread. With real people in real situations and a dose of Pekar autobiography and political awareness.
Story ..... **Harvey Pekar**
Art ..... **Meyerik, Dumm, Simpson Friedman & Budgett**
[$3.25 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

AMERICOMICS

☐ **FEM FANTASTIQUE #1**
"Red vs. V" in a new series designed to spotlight solo talent from Americomics's Fem lineup. Plus Dragonfly and Betty Page.
Story ..... **Bill Black**
Art ..... **Vic Bridges**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **FEMFORCE #15**
"Witchwar"
The struggle between the Femforce and Alizarin Crimson is concluded, as Nightveil takes on her evil counterpart.
Story ..... **Wes Covington**
Art ..... **Bill Lux**
[$1.95 color comic; ships in July]

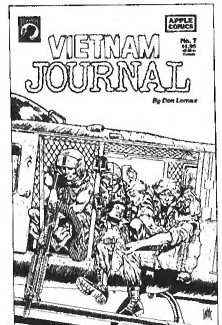
☐ **JUNGLE GIRLS #1**
The title says it all. With the individual adventures of Tara, Nyoka, and Tawnee of the Void.
Story ..... **Bill Black**
Art ..... **Black & Marimon**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **LATIGO KID WESTERN #1**
Follow more mutant mania on its way through the Old West.
Art ..... **John Severin**
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **NIGHTVEIL SPECIAL #1**
Nightveil looks to comic books for help in stopping a monster.
Story ..... **James Mason**
Art ..... **Levine, Dell & Barrea**
Cover ..... **Mike Kelute**
[$1.95 color comic; ships in July]

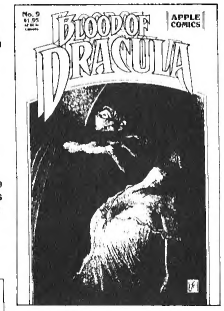
APPLE COMICS

Remember. An apple a day keeps the vampires away. You thought it was garlic? Nah. Shipping in July at $1.95:
BLOOD OF DRACULA #9
EAGLE #19
MYTH CONCEPTIONS #6
VIETNAM JOURNAL #7



ARCHIE COMICS

The Archies are back to beat the heat and chase those summer blues away. Shipping in July for 75¢, here's:
ARCHIE #362; ARCHIE PALS N' GALS #202; BETTY & VERONICA #15; EVERYTHING'S ARCHIE #139; LIFE WITH ARCHIE #269;
Easily digested at $1.35, look for:
ARCHIE'S STORIES & GAMES #9
BETTY & VERONICA COMICS #33
JUGHEAD WITH ARCHIE DIGEST #89
LAUGH COMICS DIGEST #79
LITTLE ARCHIE DIGEST #33
And to double your digest delight, at $2.25 there's
ARCHIE'S DOUBLE DIGEST #37



ARROW COMICS

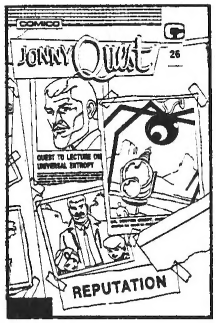
☐ **DEADWORLD #12**
The surviving heroes and Percy take to the sewers to evade their less-than-livid pursuers.
Story/Art ..... **Vincent Locke**
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

AUGUST COMICS

☐ **ADAM LOGAN #1**
For those who love a good zipatone.
Story/Art ..... **J. Adam Walters**
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **OFFWORLDER'S QUARTERLY #1**
Anthology with work by **George William Turner, Jr.** & **David Bankston**. MATURE.
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

BLACKBIRD COMICS



☐ **HEROES #6**
"Just Friends"
Finally see Olympia, and find out whet's been eating et Frank.
Story/Art ..... **Martin E. Thomas**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

BLACKTHORNE

☐ **BATTLETECH #8**
"Bruder's War."
Story ..... **Hal Jones**
Art ..... **Scooter Tidwell**
[$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **RED HEAT #1**
When the Russians invade Chicago, but they're on our side, street-wise Jim Belushi and Arnold Schwarzeneggar bring order back to the midwest.
Story ..... **Stephenson & Hill**
Art ..... **Abel Lexemene**
3-D Effect ..... **Bob & Nancy Fritsch**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **DICK TRACY WEEKLY#50-53**
Weekly adventure with "The Kitten Sisters", "Spyke Dyke", "The Clipso Brothers", "B.O., Morin, and Blossom Plenty."
Story/Art ..... **Chester Gould**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **TRACKER #3**
Tracker dons his silly union suit to compete with the new wave of costumed crime fighters.
Story/Art ..... **William Van Horn**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **WEREWOLF #2**
Denny Hayes has always loved monsters. Now he has a werewolf in his treehouse.
Story ..... **Lance Hampton**
Art ..... **Rutkowski & Moro**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

BLUE COMET PRESS

☐ **ROUGH RAIDERS #1**
Picks up where the L.I.F.E. Brigade left off. With art by **Barras, Hughes, O'Hare, Carr, Kali & Storman.**
[$1.60 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

C & T GRAPHICS

☐ **THE DIGGERS #3**
Adventure, intrigue, romance and death at the dawn of time.
Story ..... **Steve Keeter**
Art ..... **Tim Corrigan**
[$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **THE FINAL MAN #3**
How far into the future is five million years? Ask the final man.
Story ..... **Tim Corrigan**
Art ..... **Maheras, Corrigan & Pack**
[$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **GIANT-SIZED MIGHTYGUY SUMMER FUN SPECIAL #1**
At last, the consumate collection of Mightyguy.
Story/Art ..... **Tim Corrigan**
[$2.50 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **NIGHTSTAR #3**
Further adventures of your favorite heroic and sexy endroid.
Story/Art ..... **Larry Blake**
[$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

COMICO

☐ **ELEMENTALS #27**
"My Little Runaway"
A midsummer night's love story, between a little girl named Lisa and a little boy named Monolith.
Story ..... **Herman & Thompson**
Art ..... **Thompson & Anderson**
[$1.75 color comic; ships 7/19]

☐ **FISH POLICE VOL. 2#11**
"Underground"
Inspector Gill discovers that wrestling can be a whale of a good time.
Story ..... **Steve Moncuse**
Art ..... **Moncuse, Vincent & Dog**
[$1.75 color comic; ships 7/19]

☐ **JONNY QUEST #26**
"Reputation"
Race Bannon is held captive by yet another mad dictator.
Story ..... **William Messner-Loebs**
Art ..... **Hempel, Wheatley, & Mayer**
[$1.75 color comic; ships 7/19]

☐ **ROBOTECH, THE MACROSS SAGA #29**
Everyone struggles to peacefully co-exist, despite the coming of the "Robotech Masters."
Story ..... **Markalen Joplin**
Art ..... **Leeke & Matt**
[$1.50 color comic; ships 7/19]

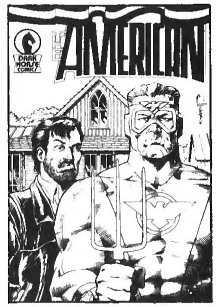
COMICS INTERVIEW

☐ **MAGNA-MAN: THE LAST SUPERHERO #1-3**
Today, there are too many superheroes. Tomorrow there will be only one. He's the original. He's the last. He's Magna-Man.
Story ..... **Dwight Jon Zimmerman**
Art ..... **Willie Peppers**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **MISSING BEINGS SPECIAL #1**
Sci-fi tongue-in-cheek about the far future in which a missing someone might not be, well, human.
Story ..... **Henry Vogel**
Art ..... **Neville & Wimblah**
[$2.25 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **OMNIVERSE #2**
Before **Mark Gruenwald** started *Marvel Universe*, before **Dean Mullaney** dreamed of *Total Eclipse*, before **Peter Sanderson** wondered *Who's Who et DC*, even before **Kim Thompson** (GASP!) produced his *Amazing Heroes Preview Special*—they conspired together to produce *Omniverse #2*, the seminal masterpiece on comics continuity.
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **SOUTHERN KNIGHTS #29**
The Southern Knights protection racket?!? Oy.
Story ..... **Henry Vogel**
Art ..... **Propst & Wojtkiewicz**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in July]



DARK HORSE

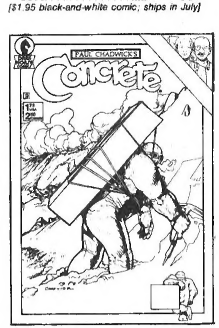
☐ **THE AMERICAN #6**
Something evil is afoot in America's Heartland, so it's up to Dennis Hough and the American to set things to right.
Story ..... **Mark Verheiden**
Art ..... **Grant Miehm**
[$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **CONCRETE #9**
"Everest Solo"
Avalanche, bodies and kidnapping. Concrete could probably climb the mountain, if he only had the time.
Story/Art ..... **Paul Chadwick**
[$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **DARK HORSE PRESENTS #21**
The stunning conclusion to **Mark Badger's** *Masque*; *Delia and Celia*, by **Gary Devia**; and more from **Ron Randall** in *Trekker*.
[$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **FLAMING CARROT #19**
"Hills Like White Elephants"
Part one of three in a Flaming Carrot/Mystery Men super-epic.
Story/Art ..... **Bob Burden**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **GODZILLA #4 (of 6)**
Tanks and planes can't stop him, and missiles just make him mad. Continues the Japanese comic adaptation of *Godzilla 1985*.
Story/Art ..... **Kazuhise Iwata**
Cover ..... **Mark Nelson**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in July]



DC COMICS

☐ **ACTION COMICS WEEKLY #617-619**
Action and adventure every week with: *Blackhawk*, by **Pasko & Burchett**; *Deadman*, by **Beron, Jurgens & DeZuniga**; *Green Lantern*, by **David & Howell**; *Nightwing*, by **Wolfman, Patton & Poston**; *The Phantom Stranger*, by **Kupperberg & Grindberg**; *The Secret Six*, by **Pasko & Spiegle**; *Superman*, by **Stern, Swan & Anderson**; and *Wild Dog*, by **Collins, Beatty & Nyberg**.
Covers ..... **Motter, Bogdanove & Maroto**
[$1.50 color comic; ships 7/26, 8/4, 8/11]

☐ **ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN #446**
Gangbuster will walk the streets again, thanks to the kind-hearted generosity of ... Lex Luthor.
Story ..... **Jerry Ordway**
Art ..... **Ordway & Janke**
Cover ..... **Ordway & Gibbons**
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/26; newsstand o/s 8/20]

☐ **ANIMAL MAN #3**
Animal Man discovers the mutation mastermind, while his family struggles to survive in the wilderness.
Story ..... **Grant Morrison**
Art ..... **Truog & Hazelwood**
Cover ..... **Brian Bolland**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 7/26]

☐ **BATMAN: THE CULT #4 (of 4)**
FINAL ISSUE.
Bats attacks the army of Deacon Blackfire with an new, improved version of the Batmobile.
Story ..... **Jim Starlin**
Art ..... **Berni Wrightson**
[$3.50 color comic; prestige format; ships 8/11]

☐ **CAPTAIN ATOM #21**
Cameron Scott goes to work in Central America and finds that his interests lie on *both* sides of the wars.
Story ..... **Cary Bates**
Art ..... **Broderick & Smith**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 8/11; newsstand o/s 9/3]

☐ **COPS #4**
Sheriff Sundown faces double trouble when gang rivalries heat up inside Big Boss' organization.
Story ..... **Doug Moench**
Art ..... **Bert Sears**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 8/4; newsstand o/s 8/27]

☐ **COSMIC ODYSSEY #1**
Book One: *Discovery*.
Supermen, Batman, Green Lantern, Martian Manhunter, The Highfather of New Genesis and *Darkseid* join forces to prevent a cosmic calamity.
Story ..... **Jim Starlin**
Art ..... **Wagner & Grant**
Art ..... **Norm Breyfogle**
[75¢ color comic; ships 8/4; newsstand o/s 8/27]

☐ **DOOM PATROL #14**
Power Girl is down for the count, now Kansas City needs ... Das Doom Patrol!
Story ..... **Paul Kupperberg**
Art ..... **Larsen & Martin**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/26; newsstand o/s 8/20]

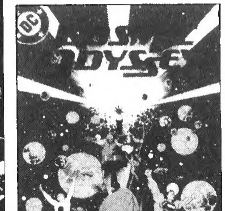
☐ **DOOM PATROL ANNUAL #1**
Maddox, Luthor, and The Doom Patrol together means two tons of fun for the residents of Kansas City.
Story ..... **Paul Kupperberg**
Art ..... **Fry, Vey, DuBurke & Baker**
Cover ..... **Larsen & Gordon**
[$1.50 color comic; ships 8/11; newsstand o/s 9/3]

☐ **FLASH GORDON #6 (of 9)**
Flash and Dale learn the price one pays for paradise.
Story ..... **Dan Jurgens**
Art ..... **Jurgens & Patterson**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 7/26]

☐ **LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES ANNUAL #4**
The Legion's Espionage Squad sets out to save Chameleon Boy and Colossal Boy from the cruel clutches of Starfinger. Plus a *Private Lives* look at Dream Girl.
Story ..... **Paul Levitz**
Art ..... **Kitson & Leach**
Cover ..... **Brian Bolland**
[$2.50 color comic; ships 8/4]

☐ **NEW GUARDIANS #3**
The New Guardians pick up a trail of death that leads them to South Africa.
Story ..... **Steve Englehart**
Art ..... **Staton & Farmer**
[$2.00 color comic; ships 8/4]

☐ **NEW TEEN TITANS #49**
Hammer and Sickle pound the Titans for a chance to kill Red Star.
Story ..... **Marv Wolfman**
Art ..... **Barreto & Tanghal**
[$1.75 color comic; ships 7/26]



☐ **NEW TEEN TITANS ANNUAL #4**
The Titans are each attacked by nightmares with one thing in common.
Story ..... **Marv Wolfman**
Cover ..... **George Perez**
[$2.50 color comic; ships 8/11]

☐ **POWER OF THE ATOM #4**
The Atom faces a personal crisis and joins Hawkman & Hawkwoman to battle a deadly menace from beyond
Story ..... **Roger Stern**
Art ..... **Turner & Wilson**
Plus, *Bonus Book #8*, by ..... **Celchi, Balent & Schaefer**.
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/26; newsstand o/s 8/20]

☐ **THE QUESTION #22**
The immoral mayoral candidecy race is decided.
Story ..... **Denny O'Neil**
Art ..... **Cowan & Magyar**
Cover ..... **Cowan & Sienkiewicz**
[$1.75 color comic; ships 8/4]

☐ **THE SHADOW #16**
The quest is on to fill the Shadow's shoes, while the original feet finally reach

Tibet.
Story ..... **Andy Helfer**
Art ..... **Kyle Baker**
[$1.75 color comic; ships 7/26]

☐ **SPECTRE #20**
Corrigan recuits the strangest team of operatives ever to prowl the streets of Manhatten.
Story ..... **Doug Moench**
Art ..... **Wozniak & Badger**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 6/4]

☐ **STARMAN #2**
"Field Testing"
Sterman learns as much as he can about his newly-gained super-powers.
Story ..... **Roger Stern**
Art ..... **Lyle & Smith**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/28; newsstand o/s 6/20]

☐ **SUICIDE SQUAD #19**
Amanda Waller reviews the odd arrey of members in the Suicide Squad.
Story ..... **John Ostrander**
Art ..... **McDonnell & Lewis**
Cover ..... **Brozowski & Kesel**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 6/4; newsstand o/s 6/27]

☐ **SWAMP THING #78**
Swamp Thing experiences e sympathetic pregnancy, producing e chip off the old bud.
Story ..... **Steve Bissette**
Art ..... **Mendrake & Alcala**
Cover ..... **David McKean**
[$1.25 color comic; MATURE; ships 7/28]

☐ **WANDERERS #6**
Dertelon abandons the Wenderers in fevor of e hostile little planet.
Story ..... **Doug Moench**
Art ..... **Hoover & Campanelle**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 6/4]

☐ **WARLORD #132**
The Warlord marshals his forces as e creature eats eway at the fabric of reality.
Story ..... **Michael Fleisher**
Art ..... **Jan Duurseme**
[$1.50 color comic; ships 7/28; newsstand o/s 6/20]

☐ **WASTELAND #12**
Three more stories from the lunetic fringe. With "After the Dead Detective", "Titty-Tet Breeth" and "Misogynist Funnies."
Story ..... **Ostrender & Close**
Art ..... **Lloyd, Messner-Loebs Simpson & Templeton**
[$1.75 color comic; ships 6/4]

☐ **WHO'S WHO IN THE LEGION #7**
FINAL ISSUE!
Story ..... **Barbara Randall**
Art ..... **Lotsa'**
Cover ..... **Yep. Wraparound**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 7/26]

☐ **WONDER WOMAN ANNUAL #1**
Five chapters exploring the meny fecets of Wonder Woman.
Story/Cover ..... **George Perez**
Art ..... **Ademe, Bolland, Perez & Garcie-Lopez**
[$1.50 color comic; ships 6/4; newsstand o/s 6/27]

ECLIPSE COMICS

☐ **AREA 88 #28**
"Barren Expectations"
Shin is sent into Aree 88, while Ryoko end Josie discover e plot to assassinete Saki.
Story/Art ..... **Keoru Shintani**
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **FAST FICTION: *SHE* #1**
Adapts the 1949 milestone adventure into comic book format.
Story ..... **H. Rider Heggard**
Art ..... **Vincent Nepoli**
Cover ..... **H.C. Kiefer**
[$5.95 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **KAMUI #29**
Kamui discovers some startling facts eboul the village swordmaster, Genpo.
Story/Art ..... **Sanpei Shirato**
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **MERCHANTS OF DEATH #2**
With *King's Castle*, by **Buslek & Fry**; *Soldiers of Fortune*, by **Brecchie Jr. & Grassi**; end *Two Enemies*, by **Carlos Trillo & Jose Luis Salines**.
[$3.50 black-&-white & color comic; ships in July]

☐ **POWER COMICS #3 (of 4)**
Powerbolt teckles lerger-than-life menaces in *Peril From The Sky* end *And The Evil Giant*.
Art ..... **Gibbons & Bolland**
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **SCOUT: WAR SHAMAN #4**
Scout and his sons are *Rollin' on the River* in a mini civil war. Plus, more *Tales of the Apache*.
Story/Art ..... **Tim Truman**
[$1.95 color comic; ships 7/19]

☐ **TOTAL ECLIPSE: THE SERAPHIM OBJECTIVE**
Zzed continues his plot to bring all planets end sters into elignment, while The Liberty Project, Airboy, Valkyrie, Misery end The Heap try to find some wey to stop him.
Story ..... **Merv Wolfman**
Art ..... **Hampton & Blyberg**
Cover ..... **Bill Sienkiewicz**
[$1.95 color comic; ships 7/26]

☐ **VALKYRIE #1 (of 3)**
"Party Girl"
The disappearance of one of Val's friends puts her hot on the treil of Eurasien sleve treders and Cowgirl.
Story ..... **Chuck Dixon**
Art ..... **Anderson & Villagran**
[$1.95 color comic; ships 7/26]

☐ **XENON #16**
"Deeth on Disk, Pert 4"
Xenon searches for e med doctor without malpractice insurence, end the deeth of e guerd puts the campus in en uproer.
Story/Art ..... **Masaomi Kenzaki**
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

ENTERTAINMENT

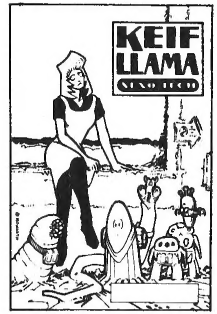
☐ **DELTA TENN #7**
Delta tries to bag a crooked cop while she dodges e loan enforcer.
Story/Art ..... **Merk Merderosien**
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. #8**
"The Wilder West Affeir"
Napoleon Solo evenges the slaughter of the U.N.C.L.E. brench in Toronto.
Story ..... **Skip Simpson**
Art ..... **Devid Dey**
[$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

☐ **CRITTERS #30**
"Radical Dog" is surprised to fid God on his doorstep in e new story by **Merk Mertin**. **J.P. Morgen's** Fission Chicken returns, along with e new "Angst" story by **William Ven Horn**, end, in the words of **Freddy Milton**, Gnuff seid!
Cover ..... **Merk Martin**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **JIM #3**
If you heven't experienced Jim, then you've been missing one of the truly mind-stretching experiences in comics.
Story/Art ..... **Jim Woodring**
[$2.50 black-and-white comic; ships in July]



☐ **KEIF LLAMA #2**
Keif gets the worst babysitting job ever in "Eyewitness end Document."
Story/Art ..... **Matt Howerth**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **NEAT STUFF #11**
Studs Kirby is back on the radio, and neither feer of reprisal, engry sponsers nor the FCC can tame his unleeshed fury.
Story/Art ..... **Peter Bagge**
[$2.50 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **NEIL AND BUZZ: Adventures in Space & Time #1**
Astronauts Neil end Buzz are sent to the end of time to explore the nothingness, but instead they find e theme park modeled efter 20th Century New Jersey.
Story ..... **George Alec Effinger**
Art ..... **Henry Meyo**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **USAGI YOJIMBO #11**
Gen the bounty hunter returns to help Usagi escort e priceless tee cup end e pair of homeless weifs. Plus, e *special* Cat Nippon back-up story by **Sergio Aragones**.
Story/Art ..... **Stan Sakai**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

FIRST COMICS

☐ **CHRONICLES OF CORUM #12**
The power of the Runestaff tranports Elric and Erekose back to Elric's realm.
Story ..... **Merk Shainblum**
Art ..... **Thompson & Jones**
[$1.95 color comic; ships 7/22]

☐ **CROSSROADS #5 (of 5)**
Grimjack, Nexus end Venth Dreedster take the crossroads to meet on Cynosure.
Story ..... **Roger Salick**
Art ..... **Shawn McManus**
[$3.25 color comic; shipe 7/17]

☐ **HOWARD CHAYKIN'S AMERICAN FLAGG #7**
The first International Soviet Surf Invitetional turns into e riot when Lenin's body is euctioned off to the highest bidder.
Story ..... **Howard Chaykin**
Art ..... **Vosburg, Ory, Moore Ven de Welle & Bruzenak**
[$1.95 color comic; ships 7/17]

☐ **SABLE #9**
Jon returns to Africa to seerch for his missing fether-in-lew.
Story ..... **Merv Wolfman**
Art ..... **Jaaska & Hazelwood**
[$1.95 color comic; ships 7/22]

GENESIS WEST

☐ **LAST OF THE VIKING HEROES #6**
All-Viking issue.
Story/Art ..... **Michael Thibodeaux**
[$1.95 color comic; ships in July]

GLADSTONE

The best are back in, so you don't want to miss them. Shipping July for just 95¢:
Donald Duck #268
Donald Duck Adventures #231
Mickey end Donald #7
Mickey Mouse #242
Uncle Scrooge #231
Uncle Scrooge Adventures #9
Walt Disney's Comics & Stories #534.
For 55¢ more (55¢ + 95¢ = *$1.50), here's* ***Duck Tales #2***
And for the final $5.95, you can purchase your very own
Disney Album: Uncle Scrooge #11.
Hervey Wiseguys Digest #2, $1.25
Richie Rich Million Doller Digest #12, for $1.75
Richie Rich,
Poor Little Rich Boy #237, $1.00

HARVEY COMICS

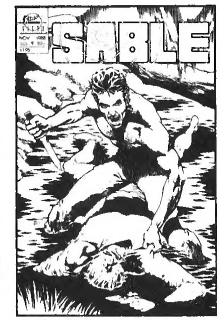
Always rich in good humor and generous with laughs, Richie Rich and friends are back in July with:
Casper end. . . Wendy #7, for $1.00

HERO COMICS

☐ **CAPTAIN THUNDER AND BLUE BOLT #10**
"Endgame"
Sperkplug's life is on the line, or just online, as The Cap and Blue Bolt face the King in the heert of the Soviet Union.
Story ..... **Roy & Dann Thomas**
Art ..... **E.R. Cruz**
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **CHAMPIONS #12**
"To Battle the Gods"
Icester stends between the Champions end utter defeet in e battle he ia destined to lose.
Story ..... **Dennis Mallonee**
Art ..... **Merrinan & Barras**
[$1.95 color comic; ships in July]

☐ **THE MARKSMAN #6**
"The Island of Dr. Destroyer"
A hendfull of Champions stege e final esseult on en ermy of super-beddies.
Story ..... **Perrin & Mallonee**
Art ..... **McDonnell, Blyberg Berras & Zamora**
[$1.95 color comic; ships in July]

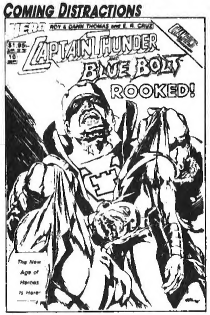


JABBERWOCKY

☐ **GOODIES #50**
40 pages of "girly" stuff by **Heike, Hervey, Gillespie, Burke, Ator & Foster**.
Cover ..... **Kevin Eastman**
[$3.00 black-and-white mini-comic; ships in July]

JADEMAN

☐ **THE BLOOD SWORD #1**
His father wes e blecksmith; his mother swung e sword, but his name is *not* Conen. He's Weh Ying Hung, the last guar-



dian of the Blood Sword.
Story/Art ..... **Me Wing Shing**
American Script ..... **Mike Baron**
[$1.50 color comic; ships in July]

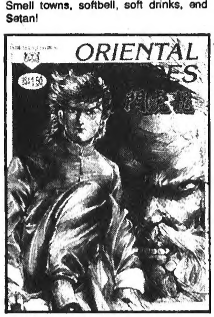
☐ **DRUNKEN FIST #1**
You may have seen a few barroom brawls, but you've never seen a drunkan fist like thet of Wong Mo Gail
Story/Art ..... **Tony Wong**
Script ..... **Mike Baron**
[$1.50 color comic; ships in July]

☐ **THE FORCE OF BUDDHA'S PALM #1**
A wer orphen obtains the great manuscript of the Tantre of Buddhe's Palm, end whet was good for the Buddhe is good for everyone.
Story/Art ..... **Tony Wong**
Americanization ..... **Mike Beron**
[$1.50 color comic; ships in July]

☐ **ORIENTAL HEROES #1**
Kung Fu masters bettle injustice in Hong Kong's most popular comic title.
Story/Art ..... **Tony Wong**
Script ..... **Mike Baron**
[$1.50 color comic; ships in July]

KITCHEN SINK

☐ **DEATH RATTLE #17**
"Slide, Sinner, Slide"
Smell towns, softbell, soft drinks, end Satan!



Story ..... **John Wooley**
Art ..... **Rand Holmes**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **KINGS IN DISGUISE #3 (of 6)**
Freddie and Sam arrive in Detroit just in time for the Ford riot of 1932.
Story ..... **James Vance**
Art ..... **Dan Burr**
Cover ..... **Mark Schultz**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **OMAHA THE CAT DANCER #11**
Omahe's rock video comes close to reality; Chuck deals with the reappeerence of his mother; and Senator Bonner prepares to etteck them all. ADULTS ONLY. For the sophisticeted comic connoisseur.
Story ..... **Kate Worley**
Art ..... **Reed Weller**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **THE RETURN OF MEGATON MAN #1 (of 3)**
Trent Philoog is dragged away from his peeceful life in Ann Arbor to continue his adventures as America's feverite nuclear-powered super-haro, Megaton Man.
Story/Art ..... **Donald Simpson**
[$2.00 color comic; ships in July]

☐ **SPIRIT #45**
Four more post-War classics, with "Satin", "The Prediction", "The Elevator", and "Ye Olde Spirit of '76."
Story/Art ..... **Will Eisner**
[$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

MARVEL COMICS

☐ **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #309**
The Black Cat turns her charms on Flash Thompson to evenge tha Parkar marriage.
Story ..... **David Michelinie**
Art ..... **Todd McFarlane**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/26; newsstand o/s 8/20]

☐ **AVENGERS #297**
Thor, The Black Knight and She-Hulk quit the teem, while the Keng Korps marches on.
Story ..... **Welt Simonson**
Art ..... **J. Buscame & Pelmer**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/21; newsstand o/s 8/13]

☐ **CLASSIC X-MEN #27**
Reprints *X-Men* #121, by **Byrne, Claremont, & Austin**. Plus a Wolverine/Banshee saga from **Orzechowski & Bolton**.
Cover ..... **Kerry Gammill**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 7/26; newsstand o/s 8/20]

☐ **CONAN THE BARBARIAN #212**
Conen swings by the Chicego Comicon to catch the First Annual Harvey Awards.
Story ..... **Jim Oweley**
Art ..... **Colon & Isherwood**
Cover ..... **Semeiks & Isherwood**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/21; newsstand o/s 8/13]

☐ **CONAN SAGA #18**
Reprinting *Haunters of the Castle Crimson*.
Story ..... **Roy Thomea**
Art ..... **Buscema & Alcala**
Cover ..... **Borie Vallejo**
[$2.00 black-and-white magazine; ships 7/26]

☐ **DR. STRANGE #1**
Strenge and Dormammu return in this first issue, but the wrong spirit has control of the good Doctor's body.
Story ..... **Peter Gillis**
Art ..... **Case & Emberlin**
Cover ..... **Kevin Nowlan**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 7/26]

☐ **FANTASTIC FOUR #320**
Tha new, stronger Thing battlee e new, less powerful Hulk in the 1988 installment of the classic Mervel feud.
Story ..... **Steva Englehert**
Art ..... **Pollard & Sinnott**
Cover ..... **Franz & Sinnott**
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/26 newsstand o/s 8/20]

☐ **G.I. JOE #80**
(All-too) Commercial tie-in issue.
Story ..... **Larry Heme**
Art ..... **Marshall Rogers**
Cover ..... **Wegner & McLeod**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/21; newsstand o/s 8/13]

☐ **INCREDIBLE HULK #349**
Tha Hulk does his level best to squash an erechnoid super-hero.
Story ..... **Peter David**
Art ..... **Purvee & Guatovich**
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/21; newsstand o/s 8/13]

☐ **IRON MAN #236**

Part two in tha return of the Grey Gargoyle.
Story ..... **Devid Michelinie**
Art ..... **Guice & Layton**
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/26; newsstand o/s 8/20]

☐ **JUSTICE #25**
Justice's deughtar is e paranormel, and there's a death in the super-crowd.
Story ..... **Peter David**
Art ..... **Weeks & Gustovich**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 7/21]

☐ **MARVEL COMICS #7**
Yep, more heroes per issue, just for you. Featuring:
WOLVERINE--part 7 of 10
by . . **Claremont, Buscema & Jenson**
MASTER OF KUNG FU--part 7 of 8
by . . **Moench, Grindberg & Cockrum**
MAN THING--part 7 of 11.
by . . . . . **Gerber & Sutton**
SHE-HULK--sings "It's not easy being green."--by . . . . . **Zimmermen, Clerk & Geldhof**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 7/26; newsstand o/s 8/20]

☐ **MARVEL SUPER SPECIAL: ELVIRA**
Adapting the New World movie starring America'e feverite vamp.
Story ..... **Sid Jacobson**
Art ..... **Ernie Colon**
[$2.00 color comic; ships 7/26]

☐ **MARVEL TALES #217**
Reprints *Amazing Spider-Men* #175, concluding the Punisher cross-over.
Story ..... **Lan Wein**
Art ..... **Andru & Mooney**
Cover ..... **Mike Zeck**
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/21 newsstand o/s 8/13]

☐ **THE 'NAM #24**
The Tet Offensive.
Story ..... **Doug Murray**
Art ..... **Vansant & Isherwood**
Cover ..... **Bob Camp**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 7/26]

☐ **PUNISHER #13**
Part two in which the Punisher hunts an escaped cult convict.
Story ..... **Mike Baron**
Art ..... **Portacio & Williams**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/21; newsstand o/s 8/13]

☐ **S.H.I.E.L.D. #5 (of 6)**
Fury and crew team up with Madame Hydra to solve the mysteries in the Himalayas.
Story ..... **Bob Harras**
Art ..... **Neary & Demulder**
Cover ..... **Kevin Nowlan**
[$3.50 color comic; ships 7/21]

☐ **SILVER SURFER #17**
Reed and Susan Richards continue their silver guest appearance.
Story ..... **Steva Englehart**
Art ..... **Lim & Rubinstein**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/21; newsstand o/s 8/13]

☐ **SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #144**
Boomerang bounces back et the Sen Diego Comic Con.
Story ..... **Gerry Conwey**
Art ..... **Sal Buscema**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/26; newsstand o/s 8/20]

☐ **THE STARBRAND #16**
Starbeby performs his greatest feet, and the world must pay the consequences.
Story/Art ..... **John Byrne**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 7/26]

☐ **SUB-MARINER #1 (of 12)**
Treces the career of Mervel's longest running character, Prince Namor.
Story ..... **Roy & Denn Thomea**
Art ..... **Buckler & McLeod**
[$1.25 color comic; ships 7/21]

☐ **THOR #397**
Loki enters the *War of the Gods*.
Story ..... **Thomee DeFalco**
Art ..... **Frenz & Breeding**
[75¢ color comic; ships 7/26; newsstand o/s 8/20]

☐ **TRANSFORMERS #46**
Introduces twelve new toys to buy in 1988.
Story ..... **Bob Budiensky**
Art ..... **Delbo & Hunt**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/26; newsstand o/s 8/20]

☐ **X-FACTOR #34**
Introducing Nenny and Orphen Meker, two nasty new mutant-nepping villains.
Story ..... **Loulee Simonson**
Art ..... **W. Simoneon & Wlecak**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/26; newsstand o/s 8/20]

☐ **X-MEN #238**
The X-Men finish their bettle to save e starving netion.
Story ..... **Chrie Cleremont**
Art ..... **Rick Leonerdi**

Cover ..... **Jon Bogdanove**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/21; newsstand o/s 8/13]

☐ **X-TERMINATORS #2 (of 4)**
Baby-snatching demons from limbo chase the X-Kids around the streets of New York.
Story ..... **Louise Simonson**
Art ..... **Bogdanove & Milgrom**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/21; newsstand o/s 8/13]

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First of three monthly, sci-fi, sexual graphic albums.
Story ..... **Alexendro Jodorowsky**
Art ..... **Moeblus**
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Reprinting those herd-to-find first two issues of *Alf*. Plus some Heathcliff end Bullwinkle.
Story ..... **Tim Gallagher**
Art ..... **Deve Menek**
[$1.50 color comic; ships 7/26; newsstand o/s 8/20]

☐ **BULLWINKLE AND ROCKY #7**
Wessamotto U. has been converted by Boris end Natashe!
Story ..... **Dave Manak**
Art ..... **Colon & Milgrom**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/21; newsstand o/s 8/13]

☐ **CARE BEARS #19**
They will not rest until everyone is smiling. *Kind of like the Joker, eh?*
Story ..... **Angelo DeCesare**
Art ..... **Post & Edelman**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/26; newsstand o/s 8/20]

☐ **FRAGGLE ROCK #6 (of 6)**
THE ABSOLUTE FINAL FINAL ISSUE edepting the Saturday morning cartoon.
Story ..... **Sten Key**
Art ..... **Merle Severin**
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/26; newsstand o/s 8/20]

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Puppies, tadpoles, and itty-bitty piglets.
Story Angelo DeCesare
Art Severin & Roettcher
[$1.00 color comic; ships 7/21; newsstand o/s 8/13]

PIED PIPER

☐ **BEAST WARRIORS OF SHAOLIN #5**
The beast warriors continue their quest to regain their animal spirits.
Story Roger McKenzie
Art Mike Montgomery
[$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

QUALITY COMICS

☐ **BALLAD OF HALO JONES #11**
Join Halo as she leaves an overcrowded urban hell behind to seek her future in the skies of the 50th Century.
Story Alan Moore
Art Ian Gibson
[$1.25 color comic; ships in July]

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Story T.B. Grover
Art Smith & Emberton
[$1.25 color comic; ships in July]

☐ **ROGUE TROOPER #20**
A rogue by any other name simply would not smell as sweet.
Story Gerry Finley-Day
Art Cam Kennedy
[$1.25 color comic; ships in July]

☐ **SAM SLADE—ROBO-HUNTER #19**
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Story Grant & Grover
Art Ian Gibson
[$1.25 color comic; ships in July]

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The dinosaurs continue their dispute with the humans over just *who* is higher than *whom* in the food chain.
Story R.E. Wright
Art Sole
[$1.25 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **SLAINE THE BESERKER #13**
Slaine stands alone to protect the future of the planet Earth.
Story Pat Mills
Art Glenn Fabry
[$1.25 color comic; ships in July]

☐ **STRONTIUM DOG #13**
A mutant's life is no bowl of cherries, but Johnny Alpha can make a feast out of the pits.
Story Alan Grant
Art Carlos Ezquerra
[$1.25 color-comic; ships in July]

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Stories Tom Tully
Art Dave Gibbons
[$1.25 color comic; ships in July]

VICTORY PRODUCTIONS

☐ **BLADE OF SHURIKEN #7**
"Live From New York"
Story Wade Winningham
Art Michio Okamura
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **KOMODO & THE DEFIANTS #5**
"The Battlefield."
Story Chris Etheridge
Art Francis Mao
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **SHRIKE #5**
"Take No Prisoners."
Story Robert Durham
Art Durham & Andrews
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

☐ **SHURIKEN #12**
"Synik."
Story Wade Winningham
Art Byers & Okamura
[$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in July]

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Story R.A. Jones
Art Burchem & Roberts
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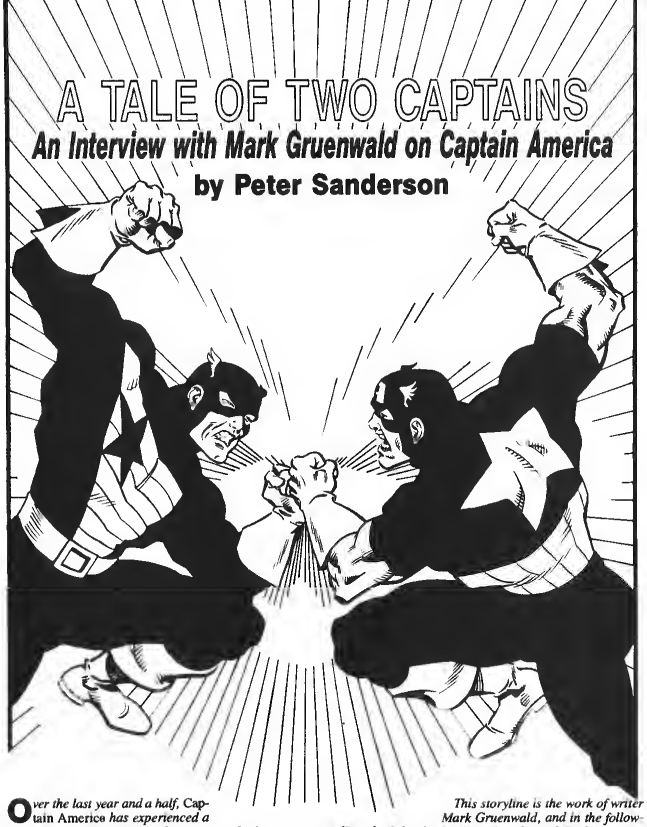
A TALE OF TWO CAPTAINS

An Interview with Mark Gruenwald on Captain America

by Peter Sanderson



Over the last year and a half, Captain America *has experienced a resurgence of popularity, to a large extent due to a controversial turn of events in the series. In effect, the man we knew as Captain America for nearly fifty years is Captain America no longer, someone else is.*

Back in 1941, Steve Rogers was given the identity, costume, and shield of Captain America by the federal government. For the most part, Captain America took his orders from the government during World War II. However, after being revived from suspended animation in 1964 and through recent times, he has acted for the most part on his own will [except for those times when he was a member of S.H.I.E.L.D. and the Avengers and that usually wasn't in his own book, so we're not counting it].

In the current storyline, the federal government, through its Commission on Superhuman Activities, demanded that Rogers work as Captain America directly for them. Rogers, having come to value his autonomy, gave up the role of Captain America, and the government appointed a rival, John Walker, alias the Super-Patriot, as the new Captain America. For many months now, Captain America *has chronicled the adventures of not one but two protagonists: Steve Rogers, the original Captain America, now in a new costumed identity, calling himself simply The Captain, and the new Captain America, a man with a very different approach to his work of fighting injustice.*

This storyline is the work of writer Mark Gruenwald, and in the following interview, he explains his reasons behind the surprising events that have taken place in the series lately.

AH: *Why are you interested in writing* Captain America *for the rest of your professional life, which I calculate will mean at least three hundred and sixty more issues?*

GRUENWALD: Gee, what issue will I be up to? Issue 700 and something *[laughs]* I think Captain America is one of the best comic book concepts ever invented. It has been said there are no bad ideas, no bad characters; it's all in the execution. I totally disagree with that. I believe that there are good characters and there are bad characters, and furthermore, there are good characters and

there are perfect characters—perfect archetypal characters. There are so very few of them in comics. Characters whose conceptual underpinnings just can't be better, so everything about them works. Superman and Batman are characters that really work. Our best one, as far as an all-around character that really works, is Captain America. I love Captain America because of his thematic basis. He's an embodiment of American ideals.

AH: *What's going to be happening in* Captain America *as you approach and reach the three hundred and fiftieth issue?*

GRUENWALD: First, there's a return engagement with Right-Winger and Left-Winger, who premiered [in those particular costumed identities] in *Captain America* #340. They are former Bold Urban Commandos—Buckies. There were three of them; one of them became Bucky and then later Battle Star (the partner of the Captain America, John Walker). These two guys revealed Walker's secret identity on national television in #340, which resulted in the deaths of Walker's parents in #345. #347, which is called "Vengeance," has the new Captain America tracking down these guys whom he holds responsible for his parents' death.

#348 and #349 feature the return of the Flag-Smasher, who's not been seen since *Captain America* #322. It's Flag-Smasher with a slight difference; he has turned against his ULTIMATUM terrorist organization. He took it over and renamed it, but the organization existed before he got there, and he has just learned that the organization has been, and is funded by, a certain National Socialist. Since Flag-Smasher is anti-nationalistic and anti-patriotic, this shocked him. Flag-Smasher is, in his own way, as big an idealist as Captain America, but his ideals are a lot different from Captain America's. So, when he found out that someone whom he considers evil, that is, someone who believes in nationalism, is funding his organization, he tried to put a stop to it, and that turned the organization against him. They are just on the eve of

"I love Captain America because of his thematic basis. He's an embodiment of American ideals."

launching their most audacious plot yet, which will use an electromagnet pulse generator to stop the world's technology from functioning. So, he tries to stop the plans . . . it doesn't work, and they go after him. He needs help in order to stop the organization and save his own life, and there's only one person that this anti-terrorist can trust—a man of ideals, a man who can be trusted to keep his word, and that's the original Captain America, his greatest enemy. He doesn't know there's been a replacement.

So, #348 features John Walker going to bag Flag-Smasher not knowing what it's all about. #349 spotlights Steve Rogers [the original Captain America], who is asked by Battle Star, to bail Walker out of the deep water he's gotten himself into.

In #345 Steve Rogers surrendered himself to the Commission, and he's kept in one of their holding cells until issue #348, in which he's set free due to some high level intervention. So, in #349 Steve Rogers has two strange decisions to make. First, when Battle Star asks him to help, he realizes that Battle Star is the guy who degraded [the original] Bucky's memory and is in league with the guy who replaced him. "What do I owe this guy? Do I want to help him?" So he's got to make that decision, and [later] he's got to make the decision whether to help an even worse guy: Flag-Smasher, who, even if he has not murdered people in the past, has been part of an organization that has murdered people.

AH: *Flag-Smasher is responsible for bringing about the situation in which Rogers was forced to shoot someone in the previous Flag-Smasher story.*

GRUENWALD: That's right. That's also very emotion-fraught in Steve Rogers' mind. It's a strange issue.

#350 will feature the ultimate confrontation between Steve Rogers and John Walker, who, despite the fact that they're real, real close in issue 349, never quite meet. They're on opposite sides of the same ice fortress. This is a double-sized issue that will also feature the premiere of Captain America's newest and greatest villain, the one man he'll never be able to beat. It will also resolve Steve Rogers's harassment by the Commission. That doesn't mean the Commission will pack up its tent and go away. It will also resolve the question of who wears the red, white, and blue. With luck, the answer will be surprising.

First page: cover to *Captain America* #350—who will wear the colors? Below in *CA* #341, the new Cap's identity is revealed on TV.

Captain America #349 will be in tight continuity with *Avengers* #298 and #299, which are crossovers with the "Inferno" story [in Marvel's mutant series]. The Captain America part isn't an "Inferno" crossover, but it crosses over with *The Avengers*, which does cross over. *Captain America* #350 and *Avengers* #400 come out the same month, and the continuity of the two books will dovetail. And if by that you figure out that somebody in the *Captain America* book joins or rejoins the Avengers, I think you're right. *Who could it be?*

AH: *What happens after #350, or is your crystal ball getting cloudy?*

GRUENWALD: It's getting pretty cloudy. There will be a change in direction. Cap's Kooky Quartet of former assistants won't be around. The Falcon and Nomad left in #345. D-Man leaves in #349, and so does Vagabond. The post-#350 direction: all I can say is it will be in close conjunction with the *Avengers* storyline. Not too much more can I say because I don't know *[chuckles]*.

AH: *To what do you attribute* Captain America's *recent rise in sales?*

GRUENWALD: *Captain America* was on the verge of cancellation a couple of years ago. They had talked about letting it go by the wayside and starting it up again at some point when someone had a great concept. The reason why it got to the point of cancellation was that we cancelled everything that sold less well than it did. So something's got to be on the bottom.

It was just a shame, since Captain America is Marvel Comics to me. So I said, I've got to do something. I think I'm doing good, solid, interesting mainstream material, but if people are just not in the habit of picking up the book, we've got to do something to attract their attention. The most immediate thing you can do is get a new art team, and if it's a hot art team or a soon-to-be-hot art team, that can give sales a boost. [Apart from that] you've got to manufacture an Event. And I'd discovered in my ten years of being up here that there are certain sure-fire things you can do to get the book looked at. There are such things as high-concept gimmicks that work, they worked this time. The gimmick will not get them to buy issue after issue: only good stories will do that. But a gimmick will at least get you looked at.

These are the only gimmicks I know of that seem sure-fire and work. Number one, kill somebody important in the book, preferably the lead character *[chuckles]*. That'll get the book looked at. Short of that, change the character dramatically. A new uniform might do it. Or get him out of uniform and replace him. Or change his life in some other major way: get him married off or whatever.

First appearance of the new Captain America in *CA* #333: Gruenwald/Morgan/Hunt

So, I did three of the above. Steve Rogers got himself a different uniform. As far as I'm concerned, the

"As far as I'm concerned, the original Captain America red, white, and blue uniform is one of the greatest costumes ever invented, and cannot be improved upon any more than Superman's can."

original Captain America red, white, and blue uniform is one of the greatest costumes ever invented, and cannot be improved upon any more than Superman's can. And still we replaced it. The new one's grown on me. We also replaced the lead character. As of #350, since this storyline started in #332, it'll be a good eighteen issues so far that Steve Rogers has remained (1) not Cap and (2) in a strange uniform.

Why is the book being read by a fairly significant numbers of new readers? Once they started looking again, they must have liked something they'd seen, because they kept up with it.

I got some of the worst hate mail of my career *[laughs]*. I got more hate mail than I ever got in my life. How *dare* you replace Steve Rogers? And what was funny about a lot of this was they would say, "Dear Marvel, I'm not a regular reader of Captain America, but how dare you replace Steve Rogers as Captain America?" And I say if you're not a regular reader, that's why we replaced him. Just so you'd be a regular reader. So many of these people admitted that

The last time Steve Rogers wore the uniform before the Committee in *CA #332*

they weren't regular readers, that they'd lost interest in the character, yet now they were up in arms because we were playing around with the status quo of someone they had lost interest in. That did not hold a lot of water.

What I predicted would happen and *has* happened is with each successive month, people were seeing what we were doing, why we were going in the direction that we did, when they discovered that by taking Captain America out of the uniform we could better define what Captain America the concept is. By seeing someone groping, trying to live up to it, trying to grasp all the facets of the concept, we made Steve Rogers look even better by the misfortune that has befallen him. So with each successive issue the fan mail got a little bit better *[laughs]*.

The more surprising thing is that John Walker has actually attracted a following. See, I've got other reasons why this storyline came about. The best-selling cover I had [on *Captain America*] up until this point is the one in which Captain America had a machine gun and was blowing somebody away. That was issue #321 [during the previous Flag-Smasher storyline]. Some of the fans seemed to want me to Rambo-ize Cap, make him tougher, more Punisher-like, more Wolverine-like.

AH: *Like Rambo, since, to many people, he's today's "national hero" in movies.*

GRUENWALD: Yeah. And they'd say, why don't you just play him this way and he'd be more popular. And I thought that would be a total violation of the character of Steve Rogers as I knew him. So I said, well, if they want Cap as this, I'll give it to them, but it can't be Steve Rogers.

"Some fans seemed to want me to Rambo-ize Cap."

And the other thing was that I get this fan letter that was very well-written and thought out asking me a lot of questions about Steve Rogers's personal life. Among them, he asked if Steve Rogers supports the views of every given political administration. This letter-writer just assumed that Captain America must be a good Republican. Here's a guy who grew up during FDR's Democratic administration, why would anyone think he'd be a Republican? I figured, 'I have to do a storyline that clearly delineates the difference between Cap's ideas and America's political reality. We've got to show that he is not a tool of the administration, that he transcends the specific political administration, every political administration.' The only way I could do that, of course, was to have him at odds with it.

In #347, the new Captain America goes after the men who caused his parents' death.

AH: *Your storyline is different from the one Steve Englehart did during the Watergate scandal in which Captain America assumed a new costumed identity. In Englehart's story a member of the administration was corrupt, in yours there are administration members who are not necessarily corrupt but have different goals than Steve Rogers.*

GRUENWALD: There seems to be a certain amount of carelessness, not paying attention to details [in the Reagan Administration] so that the Commission on Superhuman Activities is given certain discretionary powers, and, as we learn in issue #348, President Reagan never specifically authorized the removal of Steve Rogers as Captain America and was indeed surprised when they held a press conference announcing he had been replaced. He was not quite advised of that, or, if he was, he lost the memo *[chuckles]*.

AH: *Last year a* Washington Post *reporter asked you if Captain America—Steve Rogers—was an Oliver North-type character since he was acting on his own, outside government authority. Who do you think is more like Oliver North—Steve Rogers, John Walker, or the Commission on Superhuman Activities?*

GRUENWALD: I'd say it's closer to John Walker.

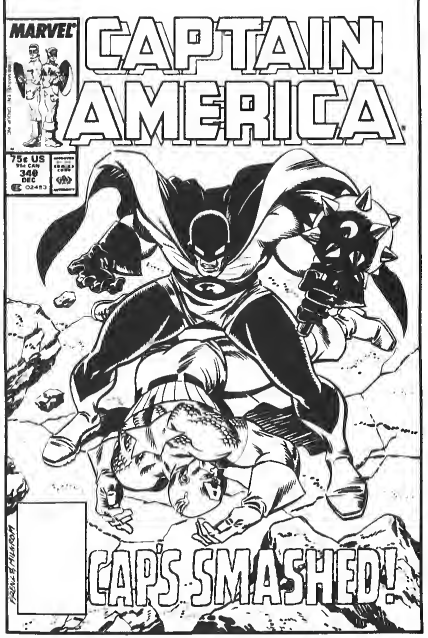
Someone wrote in noticing that many of the characters I'd been doing, mostly villains, had symbolic resonances that had something to do with America today. Flag-Smasher is an anarchist. The Serpent Society represents corporate crime and trade unions. Scourge represents vigilantism, ULTIMATUM terrorism, Madcap represented the purposelessness of youth. The Slug was drug-running. The Watchdogs are my idea about censorship and self-appointed moral arbiters. Nomad I turned into a figure of justice untempered by mercy. A lot of people have not liked my handling of Nomad, forgetting that he was the Bucky of the 50s, and this guy was not exactly Mr. Goody Two-Shoes. This was a guy who was beating up on blacks and Communists and he liked it.

I don't think it's enough for Captain America, who is a walking symbol, to be hassling with garden-variety super-villains. I think that to do justice to the concept of the character, he's got to fight [people with some conceptual basis, some symbolic meaning]. The Red Skull was one of his greatest enemies, because he's got a good look and a good name, he's got a lot of gimmicks, and he tapped into the Nazi mentality. But I was getting a little tired of Nazism as the only kind of idealistic threat that Captain America would go up against, and it seemed a little bit outdated. I wanted to find all the other forces of oppression that are more prevalent today. I wanted to create characters who could be to these forces of oppression what the Red Skull was to Nazism and totalitarianism. This is not to say that any of the characters I've created have approached the Red Skull in terms of excellence as a character, but at least I'm in there trying.

"To Steve Rogers, America is a land where you have the opportunity to live up to your potential, to acquire all the things you want out of life provided that you don't step on other people's American dreams to do it."

So, I invented the Super-Patriot character [Walker's original costumed identity] to show that even though Captain America represented patriotism, patriotism was not always a good concept. I was going to show the dark side of patriotism, and thought the way to do that was to have another character who in his own way was just as patriotic as Captain America, but who embodied the dark side of the American dream.

When I invented Super-Patriot, I did not dream he would become Captain America. That was a later idea. So his approach to patriotism is "My country, right or wrong," and whatever the administration says is the way it plays, and his interpretation of the American dream is profit-oriented. A lot of people believe the American dream is coming here to America and making a lot of money. That's not how I see it at all, and it's certainly not how I see Steve Rogers seeing the American dream. To Steve Rogers, America is a land where you



Ron Frenz and Al Migrom's cover to *Captain Amenca* #348: Flagsmasher returns

have the opportunity to live up to your potential, to acquire all the things you want out of life provided that you don't step on other people's American dreams to do it. For Steve Rogers, money is not a major concern. Instead, it's having the freedom and opportunity to right the country's wrongs, to help his fellow man, and to promote the American dream in its true essence.

John Walker is different.

He believes the American dream is to make a mint and then retire. He says, "Yeah, I'm looking after number one. Why is my country so good? Because it's given me the opportunity to make a lot of money." That its [the American dream's] corrupted essence.

That's why he got into it [being Super-Patriot], because he felt there was room in the marketplace for more than one patriotic figure, and he saw it as a competition between himself and the original Captain America. He thought he was younger and stronger and able to meet the challenge. He was trying to compete in this select market for this franchise of being America's premiere patriotic hero.

AH: *The Commission's operating independently of Reagan is reminiscent of the Iran-Contra affair.*

"Washington Post thought the storyline was inspired by the Iran-Contra affair."

GRUENWALD: That's what was so funny. The *Washington Post* thought the storyline was inspired by the Iran-Contra affair. They knew nothing about comic book lead time. I had all these things I was setting up, like the IRS investigation into Captain America's back pay, way before the Iran-Contra affair broke.

I guess there are similarities between John Walker's attitude and Ollie North's attitude. But the main difference is that John Walker gets things done *[laughs]*. He's closer to Rambo than to Ollie North in certain ways. The similarities are there, but I wasn't inspired by the Iran-Contra affair because I started the storyline before that [became news], and I haven't really altered the storyline in any way while it's ongoing. I did have Bernie, Captain America's ex-girl friend, say "Don't be sure what the President does or doesn't know," when Steve was saying the President must know of his situation.

I got a lot of letters saying, "Captain America's a fighter. I just can't believe he would knuckle under to anybody, including the government." At first, Steve Rogers was not interested in actively opposing members of his government when he figured he bore the whole brunt of their discrimination. If he perceived the Commission as evil, of course he would fight them tooth and nail. But be actually felt that in certain respects they were within their rights to do what they were doing. They were just asking for the reinstatement of the conditions under which he originally was Cap during wartime, for his activities to be coordinated from a central office.

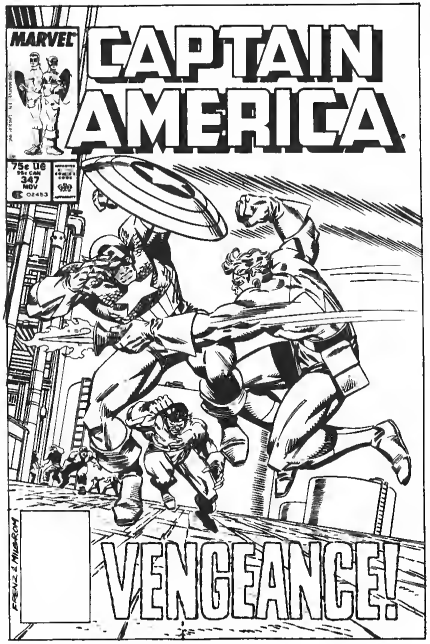
AH: *Why has he changed his mind about those conditions?*

GRUENWALD: Because he's been autonomous for years and he's found that he's worked better that way. When he's autonomous, he can decide for himself how to promote the American dream and uphold American ideals, and fight for liberty and justice. During World War II he was a younger guy and it seemed clear where his greatest responsibilities lay.

AH: *Back then his adversaries were primarily outside this country whereas now they're often from within.*

GRUENWALD: They're from within and they're harder to pinpoint. He wants the discretionary power to decide where it is he should fight against the forces of oppression, tyranny, and crime. Whereas he felt they were within their rights to ask that the original terms of the contract be reinstated, in good conscience he just could not do that anymore. He could not see himself as being something between an ambassador, a mercenary, and a flunky of the government. He felt it was important to keep Captain America independent of political control and to keep the ability for Captain America to represent the entire political spectrum, the entire nation and its people, its dreams

Cap gets even. Another Frenz/Milgrom cover, this time from *Captain America #347*.



"MURDER CRUISE"

A MIST-TREE TALE

BY MAX COLLINS, TERRY BEATTY AND GARY KATO

While in confinement, Steve Rogers ponders the subject of justice and whether his ideal of America is still alive. From *CA #347*

and ideals. He felt, if he were doing what one particular administration said, *that* would compromise his effectiveness as a symbol of all Americans, because he would represent this particular administration.

AH: *He doesn't want to be above the law.*

GRUENWALD: Not above the law, but he wants to be above the politics. And the best way he can do that is to remain a free agent.

As time has gone by, he's beginning to realize there must have been other psychological reasons for his deciding not to fight it at that particular time. One of them goes back to his battle with Super-Patriot five issues before [he quit as Captain America]. That battle was the first time an opponent of his stopped a fight when he could have won, Super-Patriot had a chance to see Bruce Springsteen instead. Even the world's greatest athlete, which is what Captain America is, can have a bad day. The greatest athletes can't perform to their greatest capacity every single time that they're up. A fighter can't win every single fight, or he can't win every single fight by the same margin. My point is that Captain America, who never loses, can have just the worst day. Maybe he didn't get quite enough sleep. That day the natural edge he has over everyone else is just a little bit less, because he can't be perfect all the time. So, it was one of those days, and he happened to fight Super-Patriot that day.

Steve Rogers has harbored some self-doubts from that fight, thinking maybe this one he would have lost if

"One can't underestimate the power of walking into a place as Captain America."

this guy hadn't gone away to see his pop idol. And I think Steve Rogers now sees this entire series of events, his losing the advantage of being such a well-known hero, as something he's deliberately done to toughen himself, to purposely give himself some handicaps to overcome in case he was getting at all soft. He sees it as something he's done to test himself, to see if he has what it takes without having the legend backing him up. One can't underestimate the power of walking into a place as Captain America. Most people would give up as soon as you walked into the room. If he walks into the room as the Captain, most people will say, "Who's this guy?" He doesn't have that legend, so that's going to make it harder. Psychologically, he wanted that. In his head maybe he had lost this edge, and this is the way to get it back, by giving himself a series of trials.

AH: *Might he be wrong about the Commission's motives?*

GRUENWALD: He may be wrong about the motives of at least certain Commissioners.

AH: *Do you think there are readers out there who might agree with John Walker that Steve Rogers' version of Captain America is a dated concept?*

GRUENWALD: Yes. I am now encountering a lot of people who never want Steve Rogers to return. [They see] John Walker, whatever his faults—and he's got plenty—as more viable, younger, more interesting because you don't know what he's going to do. I've demonstrated a number of times that he doesn't have the regard for human life that Steve Rogers has. He killed Professor Power on his very first real mission. He's taken lives since then. A lot of people say, yeah, this is what they'd rather read in *Captain America*, about

John Walker (Captain America) meets the guys who exposed his secret identity, and his anger gets the better of him in *CA #347*

Steve Rogers's first appearance as The Captain: *CA #337*

this guy who's willing to take more drastic measures.

AH: *But you don't agree that Steve Rogers's ideals are outdated.*

GRUENWALD: No.

AH: *And this current storyline is to demonstrate that.*

GRUENWALD: You took the words right out of my mouth *[laughs]*.

AH: *What do you think of the current art on Captain America?*

GRUENWALD: It is great. No disrespect to anyone I've worked with before, but this is what I've always wanted the book to look like. Kieron Dwyer [the penciller] it's hard to believe he's only twenty years old and he's so good already. He's improved by leaps and bounds with every issue, and the very first issue he did was no slouch itself. He's really getting the nuances of all the characters. I think he draws exciting figures and his storytelling is great. He's going to go far if he stays with the medium.

AH: *Do you have other political themes you want to tackle in the future?*

GRUENWALD: I've got a long list of them, some I haven't gotten to yet. But I'm not running a political book. It doesn't have a political point of view. It's not saying a particular point of view is right. Captain America believes that all political points of view are deserving of free expression, obviously, he doesn't believe in any that tyrannizes other people. Those are the ones he's fighting against. The only point of view that's here is that freedom and justice are good, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights are good.

AH: *What do you hope to bring to Marvel in your new role as executive editor?*

GRUENWALD: To make sure that we don't have so many glitches, so

"Kieron Dwyer has improved by leaps and bounds with every issue."

many strange things that get by that make me groan because they're inconsistent, and just a little bit of communication or a little bit of extra work would have been able to make the details jibe into a consistent whole. That's one thing I'd like to do, to keep things coordinated a little bit better.

AH: *You coordinated this year's "Evolutionary War" storyline in the Marvel annuals.*

GRUENWALD: Isn't it neat to have so many writers approach the same tapestry and weave a little part of it? That's exciting, that would have been interesting to me when I was a kid. That's what I'm thinking of trying to do: doing the sorts of things that really would have knocked my socks off as a kid, and made me unable to wait for the next issue, and make me very excited about the state of comics today. I've read a lot of comics, so it takes a little more to excite me than when I hadn't read so many as I've read now.

AH: *You want to embroider the tapestry of the stories of these characters without reweaving it from the beginning.*

GRUENWALD: So far that hasn't proved necessary and hopefully it never will.

AH: *I think you've been misinterpreted by many people who thought you were saying Marvel does not revamp characters at all. But then you replace Steve Rogers with John Walker at the same time as the Hulk also goes through so many changes. What you were actually saying, I thought, was that Marvel changes what happens to characters without stating that past stories never happened, the way another company has done of late with many of its characters.*

GRUENWALD: I did a "Mark's Remarks" [column on a letters page] about revamping legends that said for the most part, the 99% part, Marvel does not revamp its legends. It just continues them, and it revamps the status quo from time to time [as I've been doing in *Captain America*]. I define the basic legend as the origin, motivations, and conceptual underpinnings of a character [such as Steve Rogers], his early history. We don't do major alterations of that. We're not negating anything. And I don't think Marvel will have to, because when Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, and Steve Ditko founded the Marvel Universe, one of their premises was to keep things consistent in all the books. With any luck we'll never have to do wholesale revisions [of past continuity]. It will not be done while I'm here. *[chuckles]*

AH: *So, even if you won't tell us who gets to wear the Captain America costume as a result of issue #350, can you at least tell us whether after issue #350 we'll continue to see both Steve Rogers and John Walker regularly in* Captain America?

GRUENWALD: No, not without giving away what's in *#350 [laughs]*. ●

What next, indeed? As Mark Gruenwald keeps readers guessing.

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THE CAPTAIN AMERICA CHRONICLES

The Marvel Character Who Epitomizes "Hero"—Part I

by Lou Mougin

All right, people, do you think you can believe in a character who talks in quotes like *these*?

"You can tell that Austrian paper-hanger this—tell him that our freedom has been threatened before and we're still around to tackle anyone who thinks he can take it from us now! Hitler and his loot-crazed barbarians will find the farmer of Lexington and Concord still very much alive in the spirit of every modern American!" (1941)

"Atomic power must be used for peace, not wars! It must be used to make life better for all people! The coming atomic age is not for one man—it is for the common man—for all mankind!" (1946)

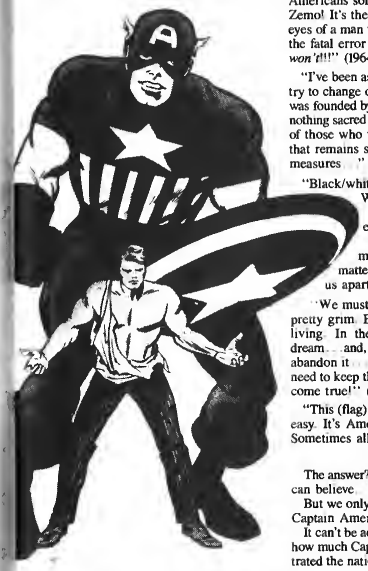
"I still remember how you sneered at democracy... how you called Americans soft... timid... too spoiled to fight for freedom! Feel my *grip*, Zemo! It's the grip of a *free man*! Look into my eyes, tyrant! They're the eyes of a man who would *die* for liberty! The world must never again make the fatal error of mistaking compassion for weakness! And while I live, it *won't*!!!" (1964)

"I've been asked to speak to you today—to warn America about those who try to change our institutions—but, in a *pig's eye* I'll warn you! This nation was founded by dissidents—by people who wanted something better! There's nothing sacred about the status—or violence—because they can be the weapons of those who would enslave us—but, nor do I believe in an establishment that remains so aloof—so distant—that the people are driven to desperate measures..." (1970)

"Black/white... young/old... male/female... and strong/less strong... Whichever side we're on, there's always another. If a person avoided everyone who was different from him, he'd avoid everyone... and, obviously, that's not the way it works. Differences can be important... but the ones between you and me aren't! We both have the same goal: ending injustice! No matter how we each do it, we're united in that! Forget what sets us apart, Falc... and remember what pulls us together!" (1973)

"We must all live in a real world... and sometimes that world can be pretty grim. But is the dream... the hope... that makes the reality worth living. In the early 1940's I made a personal pledge to uphold the dream... and, as long as the dream remains even partially unfulfilled, I cannot abandon it... You need but look within yourselves to find the people you need to keep this nation strong... and, God willing, to help make the dream come true!" (1980)

"This (flag) belongs to all of us. But it's not for free... and it doesn't come easy. It's America! America doesn't hand you things on a silver platter. Sometimes all she offers is hope." (1985)



The answer? You'd better *believe* we can believe.

But we only believe when we have Captain America to believe in.

It can't be accurately measured just how much Captain America has infiltrated the national psyche. He is not, after all, Superman. Nor is he even Spider-Man. He did not have twenty-five books a month dedicated to his exploits, like Richie Rich. Nor did he have a four-issue deluxe-format mini-series by Frank Miller to be raved about in the national press.

Still . . .

As early as the early seventies, at least *one* girl in my high school class oftimes wore a mass-produced Captain America shirt. A couple of years before, one of the cycle-riding heroes in *Easy Rider* had been dubbed "Captain America." When I got to college, around Bicentennial time, when all the fireplugs were painted in patriotic motifs, one of them bore the heroic features of Cap, and the yearbook editor made sure that the drawing of Captain America from the '76 Marvel Calendar made it into the back section. A political book, fated to obscurity, was titled *The Captain America Syndrome*. A writer in *Texas Monthly* told of a red-white-and-blue airplane that looked, to him, as though it had been "painted by Captain America." One of the tracks on The Kinks' lp, *Low Budget*, had the refrain, "So I'm calling on citizens from all over the world,/This is Captain America calling. . . ." And there was an ill-fated one-shot TV movie and an upcoming Broadway play which may be even *more* ill-fated, both starring our favorite shield-slinger.

So, as the generation of people reading comics from 1964 on up gradually supplants all who have come before, I'm pretty confident that you'll be able to drop the phrase "Captain America" into your conversation, and the light of recognition will burn bright in your listener's eyes: "Yeah, I *know* what you're talkin' about!"

We *all* know Captain America.

In fact, since Cap has been in production continually since 1964 to the present, we probably know him better than the World War II generation whom he was originally conceived for, or the McCarthy-age readers who saw his brief John Romita incarnation in 1953-54.

Captain America may symbolize the best of the Golden Age of Comics, but he is no less a Marvel Age character for that, and has seen roughly twice the longevity of his earlier career since his revival.

Cap is *our* hero, an American who, hopefully, stands for all the good that America is and/or could be.

In recent years, scripters have simply had Cap affirm that he stands for the American Dream. And though its doubtful that *every* American, or even a significant minority of them, actually dreams about putting on a red, white, and blue costume, hefting a shield, and doing battle with personified Evil, it's a nice bit of summing up.

And I'll be honest enough to admit that he *is* my favorite Marvel hero.

As everybody should know, Captain America was created by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby back in 1941, not too far before the American involvement in World War II. Both of them have, in later years, regarded Cap as one of their finest achievements, and it's not hard to see why. Their conception of Cap and his mission was put forward plainly enough, on the cover of *Captain America Comics* #1, Cap is delivering a murderous right to Hitler's jaw. On the second cover he is breaking into one of Hitler's retreats to rescue Bucky and give Adolf more of the same. By the third cover der Fuehrer had good enough sense to stay in the background and let the Red Skull run interference.

Captain America's Forties career is beyond our focus in this article, as is his brief Fifties incarnation. It is enough to note that Cap outpointed all his competitors in the Timely line, save for the Human Torch and Submariner, and formed Timely's trinity of front-line heroes with them. He spawned a horde of patriotic imitators; though, to be fair, we must admit that MLJ's The Shield preceded him by a bit, and so did Quality's Uncle Sam.

In 1954, he was put out to pasture quietly, with the Torch and Subby lying down quietly beside him.

But, in the early sixties, Marvel began experimenting with superheroes again, and had a definite hit with *The Fantastic Four*. One of the members of the FF was Johnny Storm, the modern-day version of the ancient Torch. In their fourth issue, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby revived Sub-Mariner as a villain, and he also stuck. By 1963, they were ready to give their third top-liner of the past a try. But they were cautious.

"From out of the Golden Age of Comics into the Marvel Age, Captain America returns to challenge the Human Torch!" read the banner blurb on the cover of *Strange Tales* #114, November 1963. The Kirby/Ayers cover depicted the modern Torch fireballing the shield of a combat-ready Captain America, while he rued the fact that "one of the most fabulous heroes of the past is now my *enemy*!"

From the Captain America "test" story in *Strange Tales* #114 in 1963 by Lee, Kirby and Ayers. Cap turned out to be . . . I ain't tellin'.

Within, Stan and Jack detailed an action-packed tale of a revived Captain America who used his acrobatic talents against the law—and the Human Torch. In the end, he was unmasked as the Torch's old foe, the Acrobat. The story seesawed back and forth as to whether Cap was a "real" hero in the Marvel universe, or just "an old comics magazine hero," as Sue Storm put it. It hardly seemed to matter. The story was laced with Johnny's comments about how Cap was his comic book hero when he was a lad. It ended with him poring through an old Cap comic in renewed wonder. "Wonder what ever did become of him? Is he still alive? Will he ever return? I'd sure like to know!"

"You guessed it!" gushed Stan in a closing caption. "This story was really a *test*! To see if *you too* would like *Captain America* to return! As usual, your letters will give us the answer!"

Either the letters were in by four months later, or Stan and Jack simply weren't waiting any longer. The figure of Captain America totally dominated the foreground of *Avengers* #4's cover, with the Wasp, Giant-Man, Iron Man, Thor, and Sub-Mariner (then a foe, not a member) bringing up the background. The cover copy shouted, "*Captain America* lives again!" And, in some house ads, they were constrained to add the words, "*The real* Captain America lives again!" And so he did.

The story of Cap's revival is almost as familiar as his origin. So, to touch upon it briefly: in the closing days of World War II, a khaki-clad Captain America and Bucky leaped from a motorcycle onto a runaway experimental drone plane set in motion by one of their old enemies, whom we soon found out to be Baron Zemo. Cap noted that the plane was booby-trapped, shouted a warning to Bucky, and dropped off. He fell into the sea. Bucky was not so lucky, and died in the plane's explosion. In Cap's own words, "As for the rest, by some fantastic stroke of fate, I must have been frozen in an ice flow (sic), and then found by some Eskimos who thought I was a supernatural object! Then, all those years, being in a state of frozen suspended animation must have kept me from aging!"

In 1964, Sub-Mariner, fleeing his first battle against the Avengers, saw the Eskimos offering prayers to their frozen "god," and contemptuously threw him into the sea, where he was thawed by the Gulf Stream and retrieved by the Avengers in a submarine.

Soon afterward, the Avengers were frozen into stone by an alien in Namor's employ, and Captain America shrugged off his culture shock with the help of Rick Jones, whom he dubbed a dead ringer for the lost Bucky. Jack cut loose exuberantly with a page or two of action art in which Cap took on a small army of thugs, trounced them all and got the Avengers de-stoned.

A flashback in *Captain America* #100 shows the Avengers finding Cap. Lee & Kirby.

After helping the alien return to his repaired spacecraft, Cap observed a battle between the Avengers and Sub-Mariner, rescuing Rick from Subby's clammy hands at the climax. In the end, Thor, Giant-Man, the Wasp, and Iron Man placed their hands on a rock in a replay of a scene from *Fantastic Four* #1, and Cap placed his mitt on the wholepile, as Thor pronounced, "We welcome you, Captain America, to the ranks of, *The Avengers*!"

There wasn't a dry eye in the house.

Cap was back, and by the next issue it was hard to imagine the Avengers without him. In between *Avengers* #4 and 5 he fought beside the Assemblers with the Fantastic Four against the Hulk, in an epic which combined two Marvel super-hero teams for the first time. By *Avengers* #6, Cap got his first Marvel Age nemesis, as Baron Zemo, who had been responsible for Bucky's death, learned of his old enemy's revival and came from the South American jungle to complete the job. Zemo, an ex-Nazi scientist whose head was covered with a hood Cap had caused to be pasted on by Zemo's own Adhesive X back in the Forties, organized the original Masters of evil and engaged Cap in what we all recognized as a true battle to the death. It didn't happen then, or in several return bouts to come, but we all knew that somewhere down the line, Zemo would have to die. It happened in *Avengers* #15, in which Zemo unwittingly triggered a landslide that crushed him to death. In the next issue, all the original Avengers save Cap left active service. Captain America was appointed group leader of the team, now composed of himself, Hawkeye, the Scarlet Witch, and Quicksilver.

Simultaneously with *Avengers* #9, Captain America had gained his own feature.

Stan had a fairly sneaky way of introducing a back-feature in *Tales to Astonish* and *Tales of Suspense*. He'd guest-star the newcomer in the host-hero's own strip, and then, an issue later, the guest-star would be the back-up. Such was the case when the Hulk fought Giant-Man in *Astonish* #59, and, a month later, Captain America was shoehorned into Iron Man's strip in *Suspense* #58. This tale was mainly an excuse to put Cap and Shellhead at loggerheads with each other, with Cap bursting through a wall of paper to join a steadfast Iron Man on the cover. (He never actually did this *inside* the book.) The problem was, what would Captain America *do* in his own series?

Even Stan and Jack had a tough time answering that one. Essentially, the first three Captain America stories were thinly-plotted, so as to let Captain America take arms against a sea of foes—gangsters, minions of Zemo, or Southeast Asian Communists. They looked pretty, but they didn't seem to be adequate. Finally, in *Tales of Suspense* #63, Lee and Kirby hit on the idea of shunt- ing the Cap strip back to the *beginning*—literally.

The first episode of Captain America's new-old adventures was set back in 1941, with a masterful recreation of the Cap origin story from *Captain America Comics* #1. This was the first time Cap's beginnings had been revealed to Marvel Age readers, who thrilled anew to seeing skinny Steve Rogers transformed into a super-Charles Atlas by Dr. Anton Erskine's secret formula. After the ensuing Captain Americanization of Steve Rogers and the finding of Bucky, the twosome showed their stuff by plowing under a band of Nazi invaders, of which there was no dearth in either the Timely era or in the Silver Age retellings.

* For the next two issues, Stan and Jack seemed content to simply update and retell stories from the first issue of *Captain America Comics*, some-

what cleaned up for the Silver Age. But the second of those two issues spun the format into a new phase, as the cover of *Suspense* #65 proclaimed, "Enter: *The Red Skull*!" Hitler's deadliest disciple made an impressive entry with a simple recreation of his debut from *Captain America* #1, and was identified by Stan in the previous issue's lettercol as "the Dr. Doom of the Golden Age of Comics!"

The Hitler of Lev Gleason's comics had Iron Jaw. The Hitler who prowled MLJ's universe had The Hun. And Marvel's Hitler, fashioning an appropriate costume and crimson skull-headpiece, had the Red Skull. This much Captain America learned from the skull himself, bound to a chair in his enemy's lair, unaware as yet that he had been given a secret mind-controlling drug. Seconds after he attempted an attack on the Skull, Cap sank to his knees, and rose again as the Skull's slave. His orders: assassinate General Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Cap failed in that mission by the barest of hairbreadths—when his inner nature rebelled against pulling the trigger on Ike, enabling him to veer his shot away. Regaining his senses, Captain America fought off the pack of Nazi commandoes who had accompanied him. Both he and late-arrival Bucky received kudos from a grateful Eisenhower.

Cap spent the rest of that issue defeating a Nazi operative who had stolen an experimental disintegrator ray, and, with that, an overworked Jack Kirby ended (for a time) his pencilling on the strip, doing layouts only for some of his immediate successors.

George Tuska illustrated the three-parter which followed, "The Castle of Dr. Rawlings" (*Suspense* #69-71). This ended Cap's World War II meanderings for a time, as readers were increasingly demanding that Cap's solo adventures return to the present, depicting the Captain America that helmed the Avengers. But the strip would never leave its World War II roots for long, and Cap would often justifiably ask himself if he was only an anachronistic relic re-fighting a war twenty years gone.

Whatever the case, Stan and George presented a thrilling three-parter pitting Cap against the Sleepers, three giant robot-creations of the Red Skull designed to destroy the world twenty years after the Second World War. This concept proved so engaging that Stan would later introduce a *fourth* Sleeper, and Gary Friedrich would showcase a *fifth* —and thankfully last.

In *Suspense* #75-76, drawn alternately by Kirby-Ayers and John Romita, Batroc the Leaper was introduced, being a French villain of phenomenal leaping and kicking power—physically at least a match for Captain A. More importantly, Sharon Carter was introed, albeit only as "Agent Thirteen." (Betty Ross, Cap's 1940's girlfriend, had shown up as another "Agent Thirteen" in *Suspense* #64 and was never heard from again).

The plot centered around a devastating compound named Inferno 42 and the attempts of SHIELD agent Sharon to keep it out of the hands of Batroc and his faceless evil employers. In the end, good was victorious, though Agent 13 was hospitalized for radiation sickness. This segued, in issue #77, into a tale in which Cap remembered a World War II partisan leader in France—a girl who was the physical duplicate of the modern Agent 13. This girl would prove to be the elder sister of Sharon, one Peggy Carter, but she suffered amnesia, and remained memory-less until 1973. Thus ended John Romita's short string of Caps in *Suspense*.

Jack Kirby returned with a vengeance.

He returned with *Suspense* #75. A long-running subplot in *The Avengers* had been Cap's attempting to get in touch with Nick Fury, an acquaintance from the Big One who, as everybody knows, had since become director of SHIELD in another comic book. (Actually, as Jim Steranko showed later, Nick and Cap *had* met in the 1965 blackout, but that story waited until 1967 to be told).

Fury crossed over into Cap's strip to answer the plea, and both were abruptly put to work defeating a chemical android assassin from A.I.M., known at that time as THEM. At the end, Fury gave Cap a special SHIELD priority badge, signifying him as a liason.

Fury would turn up in Cap's strip frequently thereafter, and Cap often returned the compliment.

Next issue, the Red Skull came back!

It was revealed that the Skull—who must have been one heck of a long-range planner—had cached a stash of suspended animation gas at his and Captain America's final World War II battle site. He and two aides were preserved intact by it until 1966, when they were rescued by AIM. The Skull adjusted to the world of the Sixties even better, apparently, than Cap. Playing along with AIM at first, he soon took control of the Cosmic Cube, their greatest invention. The Cube had the power of transforming thought into reality—a bit like Green Lantern's ring, only better.

The perennial Cap foils, Nazis, in *Tales of Suspense* #71 from 1965, one of the last stories for a while set in WWII. Lee/Kirby/Tuska.

Cap suddenly grows old in *Captain America* #107. Is it true or is it a plot of the evil psychiatrist, Dr. Faustus? Lee/Kirby/Shores.

Not even Captain America could stay the Skull from grasping the Cube, but he did trick the villain into losing it and nearly drowning in the sea. Since the Skull had been cheating the Reaper since 1941, not too many of us really believed he was gone. For long, anyway.

The Adaptoid showed up for a fairly-good three parter in *Suspense* #82-84. Being an android creation of AIM, the adaptoid had the power of copying the powers and physical makeup of any human, and first used his power to imitate Captain America. He was unlucky enough to do so when the Tumbler, a new super-villain out to humble Cap, came calling, and got knocked on his backside before the real Captain America intervened. Later, the Adaptoid copied the powers of several Avengers, became the Super-Adaptoid, and almost finished off Cap—in fact, coming so close that he left his quarry for dead.

Batroc returned for *Suspense* #85 and Cap stormed the Yashokka Arms Works in Communist Asia in issue #86. Then, Roy Thomas and Jack Sparling turned in a halfway-decent filler story as Cap fought The Planner, a one-shot villain who imitated Cap (again!) while pulling off robberies.

Kirby begged off for four issues, and Gil Kane came on board for a memorable four-parter. The Red Skull was back, attacking Cap first through the Swordsman and Power Man (*not* Luke Cage, the old super-villain) and then through a Bucky Barnes robot. All was set to rights in the last issue, with the Skull seeming to die in an explosion—for all of ten issues.

Kirby returned to line another three-issue story pitting Cap against AIM once more. The story is notable mainly for introducing Modok, the megachphalic overlord of AIM, and for the famous scene in which Cap faces off against a killer android and snarls, "Only *one* of us is gonna walk out of here—under his own power—and it won't be *me*!"

Then, there was another two-parter in which Captain America, forced to choose between a life of action and Sharon Carter, became a civilian—for all of one issue. However, he *did* reveal his secret identity to the world, much to his later regret.

As 1967 came to an end, Captain America began a three-parter in *Tales of Suspense* #97, going to Wakanda to fight beside the Black Panther against an interloper who seemed to be Baron Zemo himself. The trilogy finished in *Captain America* #100, Cap's first full-length title since 1954.

1968 was the year in which both DC and Marvel began sweeping changes in their once-stable lineup, and for Stan Lee that entailed breaking up his "split books"—*Strange Tales*, *Tales of Suspense* and *Tales to Astonish*—and converting them into two titles apiece, each boasting a solo super-hero. Captain America and the Hulk were the first heroes so honored. And Jack Kirby, who has always held Captain America close to his heart, did his best to stay with his favorite son... but he also had a full-length *Fantastic Four* and *Thor* each month to worry with, and, after nine well-crafted issues (inked nicely by Syd Shores, a Cap artist of the Forties), had to throw in the towel. (By the way, that Baron Zemo character was an impostor. Just in case you're still wondering).

Though it wasn't obvious for some time to come, the loss of Jack Kirby hurt *Captain America* critically, and it would be years before the book would recover... through a writer's skill, not an artist's.

As for the villains: well, Cap and Agent 13 duelled the Red Skull and his creation, the Fourth Sleeper, plus a host of Nazi grotesqueries dubbed The Exiles, in *Cap* #101-104. Batroc showed up again with the perennial mercenaries, the Living Laser and the Swordsman, in #105. The shield-slinger smashed an android duplicate of himself in #106. *Captain America* #107, however, was a true change-of-pace, a macabre experiment in horror that recalled the short-lived *Captain America's Weird Tales* of 1949. The story, "If the Past Be Not Dead!," introduced the evil psychiatrist, Doctor Faustus, and began with a surrealistic Kirby-Shores page featuring a distorted Cap figure hauling shield past a Hitler-demon covering the entire rear horizon. Cap battered his way past nightmare after nightmare, only to come face-to-face, while Bucky accused Cap of murder! It was all a dream, but one induced by the evil Faustus, who passed himself off as a benevolent psychologist to Steve Rogers. Captain America blundered through pages of real-life delirium and, at the climactic moment, seemed to have become *old*—all his stolen years manifesting themselves in an aged, wrinkled face and bony arms. Luckily, Cap was playing his own reverse-twist upon Faustus, who would return again and again, but never as convincingly as in his debut.

About this time, *The Great Gold Steal* appeared on the paperback racks. This was a Captain America novel from Bantam Books, written by sf-author Ted White, who was later to edit *Heavy Metal*. The book, which detailed Cap's efforts to thwart the Red Skull and his gang from looting the Federal Reserve Bank, was fairly well-written, but, by shoehorning a costumed hero into a passable spy-novel plot, simply pointed out how grotesque and unreal a costumed hero *is* outside the realm of comic books. Bantam, which had earlier issued an

Avengers novel by Otto Binder, did no follow-ups.

The Lee-Kirby era had ended, and with it went Cap's most exciting times. Even though their treatment of the character had floundered at times, Kirby knew visually what made Captain America work—nothing less than pure hyperkinetic *action*, directed at a small army of foes—and Stan was equal to the task of putting the words of a symbol of American patriotism into Cap's mouth ("Fascists have always misjudged free men! No man fights as well—as the one who battles to rid the earth of tyranny!"). But, separated from each other, neither Stan with other artists nor Jack on his own could ever find the right catalyst to propel Cap back to his glory days.

Jack's immediate successor, though, could have even eclipsed Kirby had he remained on the strip longer than he did. As it was, he put together the most visually spellbinding of all *Captain America* comics, though for only three issues. The culprit in question was Jim Steranko.

Fresh off his groundbreaking stint with *Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD*, Steranko specifically requested *Captain America* as his next assignment. Armed with his spy-movie arsenal of bizarre perspectives, experimental layouts, explosive action sequences, and exquisite character renderings, he added to this a touch of film noir and grafted it all onto a super structure taken from the original Simon and Kirby Caps. Reading *Captain America* #110, 111 and 113 puts one in mind of why comics of the 1968-69 era *were* so exciting.

The first issue of the trilogy, #110, opened with the moody intro of Steve Rogers approaching stage center in a five-panel buildup, finally revealed in the last panel, then switching to the dominant splash as he stood before a tattered Captain America poster on a brick wall, casually lighting his pipe. (Yes, at that time Captain America did smoke). After contemplating the poster for a few seconds, Steve Rogers turned away—and a pair of massive green hands broke through the solid brick behind him. The Hulk was on the rampage!

Rick Jones, friend to both the Hulk and Captain America (and, later, Captain Marvel) was on hand, but could do little this time to calm his green-skinned charge, and not even Captain America or the Army could do much against the goliath. The upshot was that Rick was nearly injured, came under Captain America's protection again, and was finally allowed to don the uniform of Bucky Barnes and fight alongside Cap as Bucky's replacement.

The baddies this time were that durable group of pseudo-Nazis, Hydra. Led by their new director, the fascinating femme-fatale Madame Hydra, the hooded villains provided an action-packed nine-page finish to the tale and held on for the next two parts of the trilogy. By the next issue, it seemed that Cap had perished at their hands, and *Cap* #112 was a Lee-Kirby retrospective of the shield-slinger's career complete with some choice Kirby renditions of his Golden Age nemeses. Finally, in #113, Captain America returned to save Rick, Nick Fury and the Avengers, Madame Hydra was apparently polished off (but later returned), and Cap revealed it was all a ruse to provide him with a much-needed secret identity again. Cap stalked off into the night again in civilian togs, having convinced the world that he didn't *really* look like Steve Rogers at all.

Then Steranko jumped ship, reportedly annoyed that Stan Lee had stuck a Jack Kirby issue in between his books. *Captain America* was hot-potatoed to three artists in as many months. The third stayed on and the six-part serial that followed—Cap's longest saga to that time—was the final good storyline *Captain America* would see for a long time to come.

"The Man Behind the Mask" (#114), by Stan and John Romita, the latter of whom turned out an impressive effort, focused mainly on Cap's anomie his lack of a self-image as Steve Rogers.

Sharon Carter had a chance to shine in this issue, taking out a cadre of AIM baddies on her own before Cap, a costumed Rick Jones, and Nick Fury had to bail her out against a robot warrior. However, Sharon refused to resign from SHIELD as per Cap's wishes, and he left, vowing to take up an identity apart from Cap. But without recourse to his Steve Rogers persona, he found that a difficult task indeed—made more difficult by an intruder who appeared on the last page: the Red Skull, armed once more with the Cosmic Cube.

The Skull switched bodies with his nemesis and carried on a multi-issue masquerade as Captain America, while Cap, in the Skull's body, found he could convince no one of his true identity—not Sharon, not the Avengers, not the police. With the Skull/Cap manipulating events through the Cube, Cap/Skull found himself on the run continually.

Rick Jones, rebuffed roughly by a man who seemed to be his old mentor, deserted him and took up with Captain Marvel.

The tale gathered steam in #117 when the disguised Cap/Skull, teleported to the isle of the Exiles, met up with a red-winged falcon called Redwing who saved him from his hosts' tender mercies, and then met its master, a black American named Sam Wilson.

Sam Wilson, speaking with his new partner in a native village terrorized by the Exiles, claimed to have answered a newspaper ad for a teacher of falconry. He hopped a steamer, or so he said, and fell into the hands of the Exiles, who were searching for diversion from their boring existence. After discovering their tyrannic nature, he made for the tall timber, but was still stranded on the island. Cap/ Skull convinced Wilson that the best tactic was to organize the natives into a fighting force and oust the Exiles, and the best manner of doing that was by giving them a symbol to rally around —a costumed hero. Thus, within the space of a page, did

A newcomer named Steranko tries his hand at Cap: from #110 Lee/Sternako/Sinnott.

Sam Wilson become the Falcon. And how this would affect *Captain America* from thence onward even Stan Lee probably couldn't have foretold.

In the next issue Cap/Skull and the Falcon trounced the Exiles with the help of the natives, but the Skull/Cap transported the pair to his own lair for a showdown fight. Even though he restored himself and Cap to their rightful bodies, the Cosmic Cube made the combat pathetically one-sided, until Stan Lee threw in one of his patented wild-cards: Modok, the master of AIM who had created the Cube, deactivated it by remote control. The Skull used its last vestige of power to teleport himself away, but he had suffered another defeat. Well, at least he hadn't gotten killed this time.

Gene Colan had drawn the last four parts of the serial. He remained on *Cap* for nineteen more months, sometimes paired with ace inkers such as Joe Sinnott or Wally Wood, at other times poorly served by Dick Ayers. But neither he nor Stan seemed up to the challenge of keeping *Captain America* a readable book. For one thing, Stan was adopting a less verbose style, and, like many of his contemporaries, was being outdistanced by the young turks of the 1970's who were forging a new, more up-to-date style of writing—writers like Roy Thomas, Denny O'Neil, and Steve Skeates. Plus there was the fact that Marvel, undeniably, was stagnant—turning out the same stuff in the same books month after month. As a final blow, Jack Kirby pulled out entirely and went to DC to begin his Fourth World Trilogy, ringing down the curtain on Marvel's first great age. Most of the books suffered at this time, and *Captain America* was no exception.

Therefore, the only thing that really needs to be said about this period is a milestone of spots in #130 in which, for once, Cap sided *with* a group of student radicals instead of against them. The Falcon *did* make a comeback appearance in #126, and the Skull came back in #129, and the time-worn device of a robot-Bucky, manipulated by what proved to be a robot Baron Strucker, surfaced in #131-132. So much for that.

Obviously a change was needed. Instead of switching creators, Stan decided to give Cap a regular partner—the Falcon. And since the Falcon was black and was involved in the plight of blacks living in the ghetto, it was hoped that this would make Captain America *relevant*—a watchword of the 1970-71 season, in which super-heroes were expected to grapple with social problems as well as super-villains. Perhaps *Captain*

The Captain confides but is interrupted with the Falcon in *Captain America* #133.

America could thus become Marvel's *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*!

Of course, such was not the case, but the inclusion of Falcon in *Captain America* #133 in a battle against Modok, AIM and The Bulldozer at least saved Stan the pain of having to repeat the "Who-am-I?" and "Is-Bucky-dead?" cliches that he had worn blunt by now. It even rated a reprint of a Colan/Ayers panel in *Newsweek*, alongside another bunch of comics which were deemed Frightfully Relevant. Since their styles seemed to mesh, when Falcon remarked "My work here—on behalf of my people—has only begun!", Cap rejoined, "You mean—*our* work! *Captain America* has finally found—a *partner*!"

So he had—for just about ninety issues.

The problem was that the *stories* remained inadequate, though often well-drawn, for some issues to come. Cap and the Falcon were not meant for the likes of the Mole Man and the Grey Gargoyle, both of whom they tackled with Nick Fury and SHIELD as ever-present back-up men. There was a fairly good issue in which the two-some tackled Stone-Face, a Harlem crime boss, and Stan did manage a nice subplot with Sharon Carter and Cap keeping their distance, disagreeing over Sharon's endangering her life as a SHIELD agent—but the added impetus that would restore Captain America to the status of American Myth was missing. And, though Gene Colan could draw a lifelike Cap that was pleasing to look upon, he couldn't make Captain America *larger* than life ala Kirby and Steranko. So, with other commitments, (such as *Tomb of Dracula* weighing him down, Gene gave way to John Romita, who did a creditable job (at least as good as, possibly better than, his *Spider-Man*) for a while.

In #139 Stan tried a new tack, putting Steve Rogers in a policeman's uniform at the behest of the New York police commissioner, and sending him out to solve the mystery of seven missing cops. His eternal nemesis, cast in the image of the long-ago Sgt. Duffy, was Sgt. Mike Muldoon, who later turned up as the masked villain known as the Cowled Commander. (Obviously, Sgt. Muldoon spent a lot of Saturday afternoons watching 15-part movie serials.) The Falcon got a girlfriend, one Leila Taylor, who treaded a line between militant and female-love-interest and, usually, was more interesting than Sam.

Such was the state of affairs when, in 1971, Stan Lee finally gave the scripting duties on *Captain America* to his first successor, Gary Friedrich.

Friedrich was not a first-rate super-hero scribe, but at least he knew a bit more what Relevance was supposed to be about. His first script finished

up Stan's Grey Gargoyle saga, but his next—the only giant-sized, 25 cent issue of *Captain America*—set both Captain America and the Falcon against a horde of black militants, led by a hooded type known only as The Man. When Cap burst in to save a Boy's Club manager from the mob, one of the militants gave with the classic, "He ain't nuthin' but a honkey in his *long-johns!*" Cap and Falc unmasked The Man as the Red Skull. Since the Skull, red headpiece or not, was demonstrably not black, the whole riot fizzled to a halt.

Friedrich soon ironed out the differences between Cap and his lady, and put Sharon in charge of a band of female SHIELD agents known as the Femme-Force. The whole gang joined in for a five-parter in which Nixon, Mitchell, Spiro and all the ruling clique sent them against a massive HYDRA operation that also drew in the Kingpin, the Schemer, the Red Skull, and the Fifth-and-final-to-date-Sleeper. Somewhere in there was a fine solo-chapter of the Falcon, drawn by Gray Morrow.

After #148, Mike Friedrich was supplanted by Gerry Conway, who propelled our heroes into a four-issue melee against Batroc, a duplicate of The Stranger, Mr. Hyde and the Scorpion. Cap was on the rebound, but not quite *there*, yet. Meantime, Sal Buscema had taken over the art chores for a three-year run, adequately if not spectacularly.

Then came Steve Englehart.

Okay, folks, let's get it out right here in the open: Steve Englehart is probably, hands down, the *best* writer to handle Captain America in his entire forty-seven-year history. He had (and still has) the talent, the ability to assimilate what had gone before and build upon it while staying true to the character's nature, the sense of story, and one thing more.

To Steve Englehart—and to many of us—Captain America was *America*.

Not only was Cap a knight in blue chain-mail armor with a three-color shield, but in Englehart's incarnation he would suffer the same defeats, savor the same triumphs, and mirror the fate of the country whose name he bore.

And since this was around the time of Watergate, there was suffering aplenty. In comics, few suffered—or triumphed, later—more than Cap.

Englehart's first issue, #153, effectively tied up old plotlines from the Friedrich/Conway era with a fight between Nick Fury and Cap, the former of whom being jealous of his girlfriend Val's taking a shine to the shield-slinger *and* jealous that Cap did not age, while Fury had aged some since World War II. (Since a later story established that Nick had staved off old age himself since the 1950's with an Eternity Formula, his conduct, in retrospect, seems even more ungentlemanly). Cap polished off Fury, since it was *his* comic book, and gave him the lowdown: "I didn't *gain* twenty years, buddy... I *lost* them!" Val and Nick patched up differences, and Sharon quit SHIELD, bound that nothing would stand between her and her Captain anymore. But since this was only half a comic book, and Steve and Sharon were departing for a Bahamas vacation, a lot more remained to be told in that issue.

The Falcon discovered that somebody garbed in Cap's costume was, apparently, running around Harlem beating up on local residents for the heinous crime of being black. The Falcon caught the duplicate Captain America in the act and found him a virtual doppelganger of his partner. He was slugged from behind by someone who was the spittin' image of Bucky Barnes! "Now," declared the star-spangled interloper, "there's nothing to stop the comeback of—the real Captain America and Bucky!"

The ersatz Cap and Bucky attempted to beat out of Falc the location of the current Captain America. Luckily, Sam Wilson's nephew had seen the abduction and roused the neighborhood to action, rescuing the Falcon and putting the outnumbered pair to flight.

Cap II next passed himself off to the Avengers, learned his counterpart's location, and zoomed off in a stolen shuttlecraft.

The cover of #155 gave readers who had a knowledge of Marvel's 1950s incarnation, as Atlas Comics, a clue as to the doppleganger Captain America's true identity. He and Bucky were depicted fighting a Red Skull, the Man With No Face, the original Electro, and Communist spies—all of them foemen of the Captain America published by Marvel in 1953-54, and reprinted in several issues of *Fantasy Masterpieces/ Marvel Super-Heroes*. The story was titled, "The Incredible Origin of the Other Captain America!"

After capturing Steve Rogers and Sharon Carter, with Bucky as bait, Captain America-the-other revealed to his charges, "I am the *Captain America of the 1950s*! I am the *other* Captain America!"

He told of a youth who had hero-worshipped Captain America during the Big War. After hearing of his idol's disappearance, he made Captain America his life-study. Said study

A fan grows up to be the "other Captain America" of the '50s. From *CA* #155 by Steve Englehart/Sal Buscema/Frank McLaughlin.

Cap is framed for murder and goes through CRAP to clear himself. From *CA* #169, by Englehart/Friedrich/S. Buscema/McLaughlin.

brought him to postwar Germany, to study Cap from the Nazi point of view. He found the German's version of the Super-Soldier Serum that created Cap, written down just before the scientist was killed. With this data, the unnamed historian offered his services to President Truman in the Korean War. Plastic surgery changed him into a physical duplicate of Steve Rogers, whose name he adopted, but before he could inject himself with Super-Soldier juice, some fink called an armistice. Truman himself told him Captain America would no longer be needed.

Dejected, "Steve Rogers" sought a job at a small academy at which Captain America had indeed been depicted in postwar issues of *Captain America Comics*. There he met a student, Jack Monroe, who was a ringer for Cap's long-lost boy-pal, and who even called himself "Bucky."

The teacher revealed his project to the lad, who designed a Captain America costume for him and a Bucky outfit for himself. The last piece of the puzzle was the advent of the new Red Skull—a pale copy of the original, but still able to stage a terrorist act at the United Nations. And, reprinting pages from *Young Men Comics* #24 to authenticate the tale, the story rolled on as "Rogers" and "Bucky" donned their colorful outfits, injected themselves with the serum, and became the new Captain America and Bucky.

A montage, featuring Cap's foes from the Fifties, followed. This Captain America had a heroic past... for a time. "But somehow we seemed to outgrow the world. We began finding Reds where others saw nothing, like in Harlem and Watts!" (The words were punctuated by a scene of Cap and Bucky terrorizing a black man in an alley.) "In fact, we found that most people who weren't pure-blooded Americans were Commies!" Cap and Bucky were called in by the government, rendered unconscious, and frozen in suspended animation tanks "until we can cure them." So did the two crusaders-gone-wrong spend the years 1956 to 1972, until a scientist, incensed by Nixon's trip to China and his upcoming sally into Russia, freed his charges. The pseudo-Captain America and Bucky lived again.

After being told of the Cap of the current days, they assumed him to be another replacement, and began their crusade. It ended with the two Captain Americas facing off against each other. With his shield splintered on the original Cap's, and his uniform in tatters, the '50s Captain America finally learned the truth: that he was fighting his idol, the original Captain America! With that, he charged straight into a haymaker that carried him backward, senseless.

The original Cap returned his successor and his Bucky to the cryogenic tanks, saying "But all the time I'll be thinking... that he could have been *me*."

But the best was yet to come.

Steve and Sal pit Cap and Falc against Viper, Solarr, Dr. Faustus (in which Cap restored the memory and mental equilibrium of Peggy Carter, his long-ago partisan sweetheart and Sharon's older sister), and a Serpent Squad composed of Cobra, the Eel and the Viper. The Yellow Claw popped in for a four-parter, the first of which being drawn by Alan Weiss.

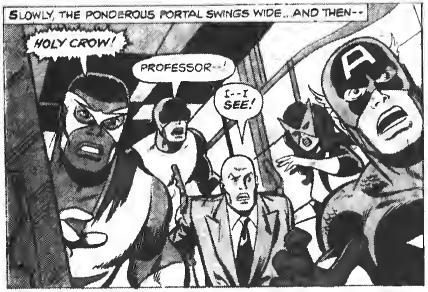
For the December, 1973 issue, Roy Thomas and Tony Isabella stepped in to spell Englehart and introduced Phoenix—*not* the X-Man, but the son of Baron Zemo, out for revenge upon his father's "murderer."

All in all, it was a good year, and proved that Englehart could be relied upon for a good *Captain America*. The book was *readable* again.

But few could have predicted the heights Cap would reach in the next two years, with a saga that ran two years and saw Captain America save his country, lose faith in its leaders and government and, perhaps, in himself, and then saw him regain it all in a tour-de-force. It was Cap's Watergate saga.

It began innocuously enough: the cover of *CA* #169 had Cap getting bowled over by The Tumbler. Inside, Cap helped the Falcon fight a mob and, and—to perk up his partner's spirits—arranged for the Black Panther to take him to Wakanda to have him fitted for flight wings. After *that*, Cap chanced to be cycling by an appliance store window festooned with television sets, all of whose screens showed one image: his face!

It was a *political* commercial alleging Captain America's crusade for law and order was never sanctioned by "recognized legal agencies" and how he attacked private citizens, such as Doctor Faustus, (the fact that Faustus had threatened Cap's *life* was never mentioned). Shadows were cast upon Cap, and that no one in the American government would claim specific responsibility for his actions. "Yet, he continues to roam the streets striking at will those who displease him!" stated a new face on the screen, one which belonged to Quentin Harderman, an advertising exec. "He claims he does it all for America! *Your* America?" The face was replaced by the disclaimer that the message had been sponsored by the Committee to Regain America's Principles,



Cap battles against and alongside the old X-Men in *CA* #174. This was when

usually abbreviated to the telling acronym CRAP. And, as Cap turned and looked into the faces of a gathering crowd, there were a lot of people eager to believe CRAP.

A clench-toothed Cap hastened to the Committee's headquarters (not, regrettably, called the CRAP House) and snarled to Harderman, "When some smooth-worded scum like you can take years of a man's career and scramble it into a threat against the people he's dedicated to fight for—the obscenities just don't come quick enough!"

Harderman, for his part, was eager to please, so it seemed. If Cap took part in a charity boxing exhibition, the heat would be off. Our hero agreed. On the way out, he met with The Tumbler who had apparently finished a liquor store job. A brief fight ensued, in which Cap proved his superiority but was unable to capture his tricky foe.

Cap soon found Peggy Carter had joined SHIELD, and he was persona non grata there. Nick Fury cheered the ad campaign from the sidelines.

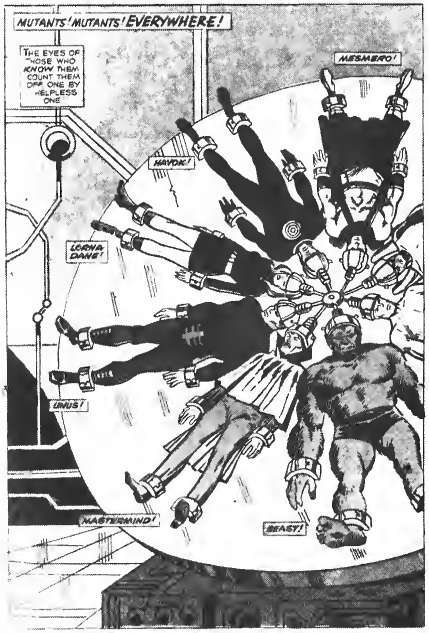
Harderman revealed in his thoughts that the Viper, one of Cap's old opponents and an ex-advertising man himself, had plotted the entire caper. He introduced the Tumbler to Cap, the former in civilian guise. Captain America was at the point of apprehending his foe when the latter gave out a shriek and collapsed dead. Everyone present, Cap included, drew back in horror, assuming Captain America had murdered his antagonist. Watching unseen, a masked villain congratulated himself on the murder which had further tarnished Cap's name. Next issue, we learned his name—Moonstone—and watched as he laser-blasted Cap into submission, becoming a potential replacement for his prey in the hero-firmament, with Harderman backing him.

Cap, awakening in a jail cell, heard Moonstone and Harderman press conference. The two malefactors fail to reveal, but we get to see, that their discrediting campaign was inspired by Cap's triumph over the Viper, their other partner.

While Cap awaited trial, a coterie of costumed-types blasted through the cell wall and, declaring themselves his supporters, urged him to come with them. Cap, however, refused, believing he would be cleared in court and knowing he would break the law by leaving jail. He joined the guards in trying to subdue his "rescuers," until the latter sleep-gassed them all and hauled the hero away. When Cap awoke again, seconds later, he discovered his "saviors" to be another component of the anti-Cap conspiracy.

Meanwhile, The Falcon returned to America, having helped the Panther corral Stone-Face in Wakanda with his new flight-power. He was informed bluntly by Iron Man that he must

Mutantmania had just begun and no one knew. By Englehart/S. Buscema/Colletta.



Revealing the identity of Number One in *Captain America* #175. You never got to see his face, which is probably all for the best

find Cap and return him to jail before the Avengers act on their own. The two partners faced off in a darkened Manhattan street. Cap rallied the Falcon to his cause. But, seconds later, Moonstone appeared, announced himself "Captain America's *replacement!*" He went on to admit to the Tumbler's murder and his involvement with Harderman before knocking out the heroes with his laser-burst.

The cliffhanger segued into a last-minute save from Harderman, who snapped to Moonstone, "Don't even think about killing those two! No matter what sort of ad campaign we ran afterwards, their deaths would make them *martyrs*—meaning *heroes*—to a *large* segment of the American public!" Moonstone, bundling his adversaries up, grudgingly acknowledged, "People always want new *thrills*, but *death* is too *oppressive*."

Cap and Falc escaped from under the CRAP squad's noses, necessitating Moonstone's having to be bashed on the back of the head to fake a good excuse to reporters. The good guys went to Nashville, whose museum housed the moonrocks, which Moonstone had confessed gaining his power from. There, just minutes before the opening of a Merle Haggard concert and months before *Giant Size X-Men* #1, the heroes ran into Banshee, mutant vocalist extraordinaire. Accusing the other heroes of "tracking him down for their scurvy gang," Banshee attacked Cap and Falc with battering-ram sonics. Black Canary would have envied. Cyclops did a walk-on, trying to apprehend the antagonist, but wasn't successful.

When Captain America and his cohort revived, they found themselves in the presence of Cyke, Professor X, and Marvel Girl, the few remaining X-Men. Xavier declared that "Many of our allies—and many of our enemies—have been captured by a group bent on destroying us!" Since it was difficult to distinguish friend from foe at this time, Banshee made an understandable (for him) mistake. "I believe that the group that hunts you is the same group that hunts us!" Cap agrees to help all he can.

The *real* enemy was the Secret Empire, that former branch of HYDRA that had haunted the Hulk and Sub-Mariner in *Tales to Astonish* circa 1967. Several mutants—the Beast, Angel, Iceman, and others—had been abducted by the group, for reasons unknown. (Back in those halcyon days, the Marvel mutant population was still at a reasonable minimum.) Quentin Harderman was one of their agents. The one lead they had into the Empire was an old girlfriend of the Beast's who was an Empiricist.

Through a complicated ruse, a disguised Cap and Falc ingratiated themselves with her, did a job for the Empire, and were allowed into their inner sanctum below a Texas desert. There, the mysterious Number One, described America as "reeling from continuous body blows" after the Watergate and Captain America scandals, and that, thanks to Moonstone, America was up to its knees in CRAP. "So that's the plan!" thought Cap. "Steal the people's faith in me . . . and pervert it!" A battle ensued, with Cap and the Falcon backstopped by their mutant allies. But the book ended on another cliffhanger, with Captain America and company apparently slain by an "atomic annihilator."

In the next issue, their "assassins" prove to be a disguised Gabe Jones and Peggy Carter.

The Empire, in a ship powered by the brain-waves of the captive mutants, landed a "flying saucer" craft on the White House lawn. Neither the army nor Moonstone seem to be able to defeat it. Moonstone advised America, on television, to submit lest destruction ensue.

Then, Captain America et al struck, cleaning out the Empire hirelings, with Cap himself eclipsing Moonstone. When Harderman attempted to salvage himself with fast talk, a disgruntled Moonstone spilled their secret plans to the nation via the camera crews which were covering their battle. Finally, Captain America cornered the mastermind of the Empire, Number One, his face still hooded, straight into the Oval Office. There, alone Cap unmasked him, and shouted, "Good Lord! You!!"

"Exactly!" barked Number One, whose face we never saw, but never needed to. "But high political office didn't satisfy me! My power was still too constrained by legalities! I gambled on a coup to gain me the power I craved—and it appears that my gamble has finally failed! I'll cash my chips, then!" And so saying, he put a gun to his head and fired.

Cap staggered outside, not noting the presence of the camera crews or exultant heroes. As Englehart's captions described it, "A man can change in a flicker of time! This man trusted the country of his birth . . . he saw its flaws . . . but trusted in its basic framework . . . its stated goals . . . its long-term value! Trusted. This man *now* crushed inside. Like millions of other Americans, each in his own way, he has seen his trust mocked! And *this* man is *Captain America*!"

For a little while.

[To be concluded in the next issue of *Amazing Heroes*]

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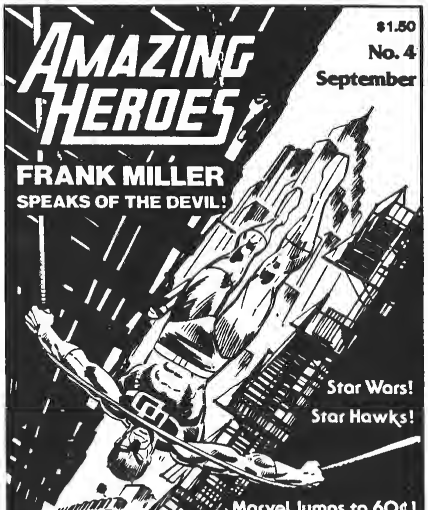

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The Celebrity AIDS Book

A Preview

by Andy Mangels

Fast on the paperback heels of *Strip AIDS USA* comes another "jam" book to benefit AIDS foundations. This one, *the Celebrity AIDS Book*, is being spear-headed by the *Saturday Evening Post*.

Unlike its two comic book predecessors, *The Celebrity AIDS Book* unites artists and celebrities from all of the arts: Movies, TV, Comic Books, Music, Dance, Comic Strips, Politics, and several "real world," non-celebrity people.

Tim Quinn, humor editor at the *Saturday Evening Post*, is editing the book, a position about which he at first felt very odd. "We have several children's magazines here at the *Post*," says Quinn, "including *Jack and Jill*, *Humpty Dumpty*, and *Child's Life*. We run letter's columns for the kids, including a doctor's column. We kept getting lots of letters from kids saying 'Look, what's this AIDS? We've heard about it, but our parents won't tell us what it is, and we want to know about it.'"

Cory SerVaas, publisher of the *Post*, then came to Quinn and asked him to do an AIDS-related book—one which would get all of the facts across to kids (defined here as "early teens to late teens"). "I thought 'Oh God,'" says Quinn, "I don't want to do that. I don't know the first thing about it, and I'm the humor editor for goodness sake! I thought about it for a while, and came up with something that I would want to read myself."

Quinn then read several AIDS-related books, knowing nothing about the disease "other than the 'fact' that if you meet somebody with AIDS you're supposed to be scared. I started reading several long, dull, boring books on AIDS, which at least limited my ignorance on that matter. These were the kinds of books that if you gave them to a teenager, they wouldn't get past the first paragraph."

Quinn had been involved with *Food For Thought* in England in 1985. *Food For Thought* was a famine-relief book, the proceeds of which benefitted Bob Geldof's *Live Aid* program. "We had asked all of the top British cartoonists to contribute a page to the magazine. Some of them did strips about Ethiopia, while others of them just did humorous strips. In the end, we had a wonderful magazine. It sold for a pound, and we sold over a million copies in England alone!"

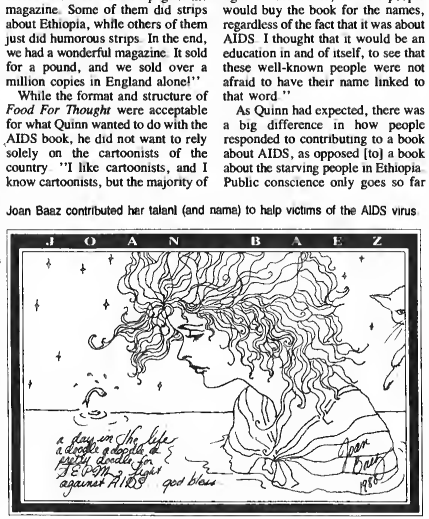
While the format and structure of *Food For Thought* were acceptable for what Quinn wanted to do with the AIDS book, he did not want to rely solely on the cartoonists of the country. "I like cartoonists, and I know cartoonists, but the majority of the general public can't tell one cartoonist from another. So I thought 'Right, we'll get the greatest cartoonists I can find, but we'll open it up a little and see if celebrities will come in on the book as well. Writers, actors, anybody who is anybody. My idea was that the only way to sell a book with the word AIDS in the title, was to make it very commercial."

After tracking down many phone numbers and addresses, Quinn sent many "celebrities" a simple letter, telling them that the *Post* was putting together a book which featured comic strips, cartoons, photos, poems, sketches, stories, and even simple messages. These would be combined with easily understood facts about the disease. "The facts would be extremely simple," says Quinn, "because I knew we would be selling the book to teenagers, and as soon as they came to a whole pile of facts, they would not read it. My ideas is almost subliminal; on each page there is a fact, but they are so short and to-the-point, that it will almost go into their head without reading it."

Quinn did not specifically ask for material on AIDS, as he imagined that most of the people might know as little about AIDS as he had when he started the project. "As editor of the book, the commercial side of me was looking for names that I could highlight on the cover, so that people would buy the book for the names, regardless of the fact that it was about AIDS. I thought that it would be an education in and of itself, to see that these well-known people were not afraid to have their name linked to that word."

As Quinn had expected, there was a big difference in how people responded to contributing to a book about AIDS, as opposed [to] a book about the starving people in Ethiopia. Public conscience only goes so far before uncomfortableness and ignorance begin taking a firmer hold. "Thankfully, the majority—the vast majority—were only too willing to do something. Many of them called me up immediately, saying that they were proud to do something to help. Not only did they say that, but then they followed through! I had the material from them on my desk within a week! That's amazing in magazines, because the hardest thing for an editor is to get people to stick to a deadline. In this case, where they were not getting paid or aything, it was wonderful! It's quite amazing. I think a year ago, this might not have happened so easily, but people are becoming more informed."

Joan Baez contributed her talent (and name) to help victims of the AIDS virus



Trina Robbins (with Max and Mo) fights the general ignorance about AIDS

Yoko Ono (wife of the late Beatle, John Lennon) was one of the first people to respond, providing Quinn with leverage and a "big name" to bring other people onto the project. The line-up of the book includes: Stan Lee (Marvel Comics), Garry Trudeau (*Doonesbury*), the DC Comics staff (a ten-page strip using their popular heroes), Isaac Asimov, Spider-Man, Harlan Ellison, Hugh Hefner, Mr. Rogers, Mindy Newell (*Lois Lane*, *Catwoman*), Mort Walker (*Beetle Bailey*), Dan Akroyd, Carol Burnett, Sylvester McCoy (*Dr. Who*), Joan Baez, Ed Asner, Dicky Howett (Britian's top children's artist), Stacey Keach, the Djubugay tribe (an Australian Aborigne tribe), Trina Robbins and the *California Girls*, Mike McCartney (Paul's brother), Phyllis Diller, Charlton Heston, Mary Engelbreit (top-selling greeting card artist in America), Miss America, Charles Bronson, Jill Ireland, Ted Danson, Kirstie Allie, Rodney Dangerfield, sometimes *Amazing Heroes* scribe Andy Mangels, who will be doing a comic story with an as yet unnamed artist, and many others.

One person contacted Quinn about doing a piece for the book, even though she was not a celebrity. "Her brother died of AIDS, and she wanted to write about the effect it had on her and her family. There were some absolutely beautiful things that really brought some of these people together on this project. I was surprised that several people *did* write about *their* personal feeling towards AIDS. Many of the celebrities have allowed their name to be linked to the word AIDS, even though some of their agents didn't particularly like that."

Quinn continues. "All of the people who took their time and energy to do this book are wonderful, wonderful people. When I was first approached to do this, my mind said 'Oh dear, this isn't going to be much fun. The subject and everything about it will be grim to say the least.' Actually, it has turned out to be a wonderful project. The collection of names is so diverse, that there will be something in there for everyone. It's the kind of magazine I would want to buy, because it is *so* different."

The Celebrity AIDS Book will be published magazine-sized, in a square-bound format. Because the *Post* is still receiving submissions, they are unsure of the page count, although it will be somewhere between 60 and 100 pages in length, with full-color on most pages. The price will be kept as low as possible, to encourage more people to buy it. Publication will be in early September, with nationwide media coverage.

All proceeds from *The Celebrity AIDS Book* will go towards further AIDS education—especially education aimed at children.

Cory SerVaas, the *Post*'s publisher is on the *President's AIDS Commission*, and the *Post* runs an AIDSmobile. The AIDSmobile is a van which travels around the country with a crew of doctors, stopping in various towns and spreading information about AIDS and its prevention. "You can see that *The Celebrity AIDS Book* is not the only thing that the *Post* does to help combat ignorance about AIDS," says Quinn.

"One of the things I really hope to do with the book," concludes Quinn, "is help to remove the stigma from the word AIDS. It is just a disease, not a social disease or a God-sent disease or a gay disease. It is a 'people disease.' Again, we're trying to remove the stigma surrounding the word AIDS. If we can help get around people's reaction to that word, we will have done some good." ●

ANDY MANGELS is a sometime reviewer for *Amazing Heroes* (see this issue, page 71).

What's New in *Comics Revue*?

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#s 4 up available: $4 each!

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FIRSTLOOK

AN INTRODUCTION TO *SUBURBAN NIGHTMARES*

As Michael Cherkas explained, *Suburban Nightmares* is kind of an anthology. "Each issue contains two short stories and one chapter of a four-part story: 'The Science Experiment.'" The book, Michael continues, is about suburban life in the 1950s, but "not the bright, sunny" life "with white picket fence, neatly-trimmed hedges and rosebushes. Instead, we're looking at the angst and fears that lurked beneath the order and conformity of the '50s.

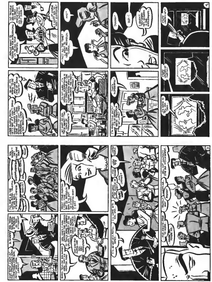
"The book will not be filled with stories of axe-murderers, blood, guts, or ghouls. *Suburban Nightmares* will contain stories about real people in real situations that have gone slightly askew. The stories are about paranoia, compassion, revenge, humor, anxiety, and things that go bump in the night." It has been described as "*Leave It To Beaver* meets *The Twilight Zone*."

Michael confesses neither he nor Larry Hancock (nor John van Bruggen, who is handling half of the art chores) remembers the aforementioned decade since they were all born in the mid-'50s or later. He says, "*Suburban Nightmares* is a synthesis of memories filtered throught the popular media," such as television b.c. (before color), lurid paperbacks, classic comics, including *MAD*, bad sci-fi movies, and advertising of the time.

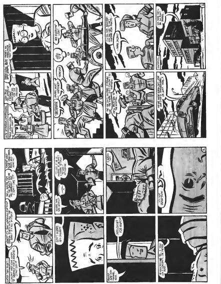
"This book is a real collaboration," Michael asserts. All of them plot the stories. Larry Hancock scripts. John van Bruggen pencils "The Science Experiment," and Michael letters and inks it. You need not have read their previous book, *The Silent Invasion*, to enjoy *Suburban Nightmares*.

Suburban Nightmares is a 4-issue mini-series from Renegade Press, starting in July; it will come out bi-weekly. Pick up the interview with Cherkas and Hancock in *Amazing Heroes* #148. ●

SUBURBAN Nightmares

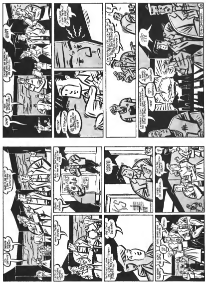


SUBURBAN Nightmares



SUBURBAN Nightmares

To be continued in *Suburban Nightmares* #1 out in July...



THE 25th CENTURY. THEY NEED NO DEATH PENALTY. THEY HAVE

CYCOPS™

Dear Chuck:

You've got to be kidding! The Cycops as presidential Storm Troopers? Come on! Still, if you've got doubts, I'll try to set your mind at ease.

First, the Cycop Force is a division of the Interstellar Bureau of Criminal Investigation. The IBCI answers to the Department of Interstellar Justice. Yes, I know you know that. The point is, I'm not even in the chain of command. The accusation that the Cycops are my private army -- wait, that's absurd.

The Cycops' true purpose is the same as it's been for the last 50 years: the protection of human rights. That's what we're here for, that's why the Human Coalition was formed: to guarantee civil rights on all worlds inhabited by humans. The Cycops make damn sure we all do our jobs.

To answer your questions about the Cycops, themselves: no, they aren't superman. Yes, a Cycop can lift 2000 pounds. He can punch a hole through two inches of dura-steel. He can fight an army single-handedly. But only in Overdrive. The rest of the time, he's no stronger than you or I. And he can't stay in Overdrive longer than 30 minutes, because the stress will kill him.

As for the M-suits: I can't believe you swallowed that rumor about invincible armored warriors waiting to overthrow the Coalition. The Cycops' M-suits are designed to absorb impact. Otherwise, if a 'cop tried to put his fist through a two-inch dura-steel plate, he'd break every bone in his hand. The suit would also provide extra skeletal support if he tried to lift 2000 pounds. But an M-suit won't stop beam weapons -- like blazers -- so it hardly makes a Cycop invulnerable.

Now, about their internal computers: you've got that part right -- there probably isn't a computer system around that a Cycop and his comp can't break into. That's why we formed the Cycop Force in the first place (you'd be surprised at the kind of incriminating evidence some people will store in a computer). But in order to get that evidence in spite of sophisticated security programs, you need a computer which is pretty sophisticated, itself. And we just don't build them any more sophisticated than the one in a Cycop's skull.

I can't really tell you exactly how the process works -- I'm not a cybernetics expert -- but the 'tecs implant a tiny seed (more like a virus, really) in the brain of the future 'cop. That seed grows into a network that twines all through the brain tissue. No strand of that network is thicker than a few molecules, yet it interfaces with the Cycop's own nervous system. The result is a computer of extraordinary power and abilities.

Using the comp's control over his involuntary nervous system, a Cycop can go into Overdrive, or block out pain. It's also the computer that makes him inhumanly accurate with weapons, and that gives him access to data from the sensors implanted throughout his body.

I must agree with you that the cost is very high. I don't like the idea of drafting five-year-olds any more than you do. Unfortunately, the implant process tends to kill anybody over six. The decision to use orphans because of that mortality rate was cold-blooded, but it was also necessary to protect the government from lawsuits by any relatives of the children.

There is no doubt, however, of the benefits of the twelve years of training these children receive at Cycop Academy. All that martial arts and weapons instruction, as well as the classes in criminal law and programming, results in superb officers. Of course, it hardly makes for a normal childhood...

It's also unfortunate that one of the effects of Overdrive is the greatly reduced lifespan, but that was the price we had to pay. It's as if they live twice the life of the rest of us, so they live only half as long.

In short, Chuck, I really don't think the Cycops deserve your fear. What they do deserve is your gratitude.

And, perhaps, your sympathy.

-- President Dale Kamdr
September 29, 2453

JULIE WOODCOCK & BRIAN STELFREEZE

BOOK 3 OF THREE

by JULIE WOODCOCK & BRIAN STELFREEZE

Eccentricities & Attitudes

The NEW SMALL PRESS WATCH

by Heidi MacDonald

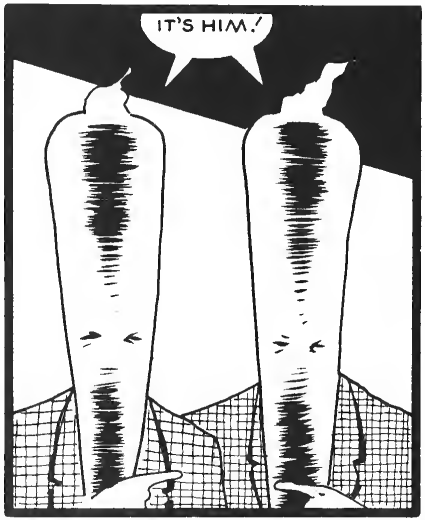
Welcome back. Sorry I'm late. No sooner have I pledged myself to doing this column on a monthly basis, than I blithely miss a whole month. Blame it on the Taxman. Works as well as anything.

Anyway, the mail is just beginning to arrive, so we'll have to do what letters columns editors always do, and vamp for time. Like how it started. Fact is, I'd always wanted to work with Bill Sienkiewicz and finally one day we were going out to lunch and said "Say, let's do that comic we've always wanted to do!" But we still needed an inker. Of course I immediately thought of Frank Frazetta, but Frank's answering machine wasn't working... but I see I'm boring you. Ah well, I have a few things to cover this time out, beginning with... Lemme see, I said I'd do a list of the Eleven Coolest comic books of 1987. By the time you read this we'll be hip deep in convention season, so I'll dispense with the comments.

#1—Raw
#2—Escape
#3—Love & Rockets
#4—Flaming Carrot
#5—Watchmen
#6—Neat Stuff
#7—Nexus
#8—Lone Wolf & Cub
#9—Tales of the Beanworld
#10—Mister X
#11—Gumby, always, forever, Gumby.

Actually, all numerical rankings are ever so subjective. I mean what could be cooler than the immortal *Gumby's Summer Fun Special*? On the other hand, what could ever be cooler than *Watchmen*? And yet, *Love and Rockets* is still beyond when it comes to cool... well, see the *Hip Parade* list in *Escape*, which puts it more into perspective than I ever could. So there.

By and by, the ever-talented, oh-so-demented Bob Burden has taken his time resurfacing following his move to Dark Horse. Though #18 should be on the stands by the time you read this, the legendary "Ash Can" edition of *Flaming Carrot* #18 has been making the rounds—sure to be the *Motion Picture Funnies Weekly* of the 80's—and suffice to say that when the Carrot comes back, it'll be like he never left. Look to the skies...

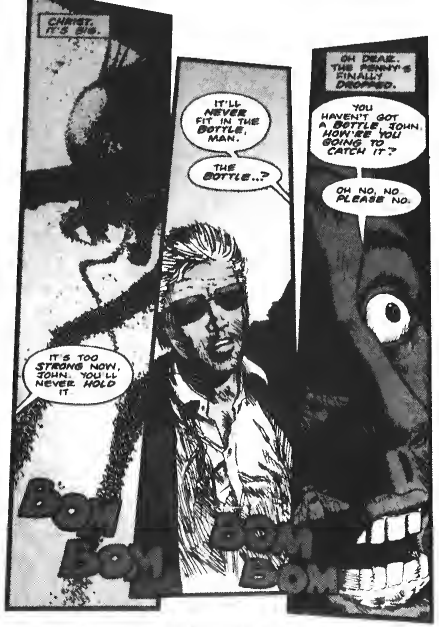


A clone again, naturally: *Flaming Carrot* by Bob Burden. #18 soon from Dark Horse.

MR. COOL. As for the coolest comic of 1988... well, I'd say *Hellblazer*, is pretty damned cool. Starring John Constantine, the Sting-look alike from the pages of *Swamp Thing*, Mr. Constantine's solo outing has surpassed even Swampy himself in terms of hot. As usual, the reason for *Hellblazer* being so hot is that Constantine is so cool. Since this is a scholarly inquiry into the nature of cool, I felt a few words on the subject would not be amiss.

First off, we should examine the artistic aspect of the book, that is Jamie Delano's writing and John Ridgway's art. Delano is an even more prolix author than Moore, if you can believe it—panel after panel chock-a-block with little teensy lettering. Like Moore, it's all quite over-written, and those bloody metaphors get more outrageous every time. But it gets the job done—and Delano deals with immediate, trendy concerns—#3's Yuppies from Hell story is the prime example of this. In addition, there is a lot of genuinely disturbing stuff here—the hunger plague from #1-2, the child bride issue. Following in Clive Barker's footsteps, Delano's stories don't tastefully look away when something gross or revolting appears. Ridgway's art is just so-so—Alfredo Alcala's ever-over-powering inking in the latest issue was an improvement of sorts—but he can get pretty damn grotesque when he wants.

Of course the biggest Cool factor of all is Constantine. #1—he looks like Sting. No matter how maudlin his detractors say latter-day-tunesmith Sting has become, just look at some of those old Police videos, "Fortress Around My Heart," or the five minutes he's on screen in *Dune* in those blamed plastic underpants, and you will, indeed, agree that the King of Pain is the Prince of Cool. (I guess that makes Prince the King of Kool, but that's a story for another day).



John Constantine: uncannily cool Sting look-a-like in *Hellblazer*—and... he gets laid.

And yet if all Constantine did was dress up in a spandex suit, he could be no more than a blond guy with a diamond stud earring. (Thank God, he wears a trenchcoat. The foreign Correspondent trenchcoat is equalled only by the black motorcycle jacket for pure visceral cool. Cf. Banana Republic catalogs.)

No, no, that's not all. As Howard Chaykin would say, J.C. is no boy-scout. He's so blasted mysterious, knowing more than he's letting on at every point. He plays fast and loose with the rules. He uses his friends and lets them die. He's got an unsavory past. He's your consummate modern anti-hero. And now that he's got demon blood in his veins, anything can happen. He's one of the first comic book heroes whose morality mirrors the ambiguity that's been a staple of movies for the past 30 years.

And I still haven't even mentioned the biggest reason why John Constantine is the Coolest guy in Comics, namely that—um, how does one put this delicately? He gets laid. Egads. J.C. is even motivated by sex, even when it distracts him from world saving. Uncanny.

In sum, then, while *Hellblazer* is, at its heart, just another horror book, and the themes it explores have been done to death in movies it's still quite diverting. Good scary stuff. Call it a good dumb read. Fun for a Wednesday night. As for what to do on a Tuesday night...

THAT'S MR. SEMIOTICIAN TO YOU, BUB. You know, sometimes it seems like I can't escape the grim spectre of *comics* in my life. The other day, I was settling down to read an honest-to-God *real book*, namely *Travels in Hyperreality* by Umberto Eco. Eco, is of course, the author of *Name of the Rose*, and a world renowned professor of semiotics, the study of signs and signals, which, as all school children know, is divided into three areas of study: syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. In other words, if reading Eco isn't the sign of a card carrying pseudo-intellectual, I don't know what is.

Anyway, I'm settling in with Umberto, ready to be enlightened, reading the title essay, which deals with levels of reality in America. I haven't gotten 2 pages into it before I hit the following:

"The United States is also the home of Superman, the superhuman comic-strip hero who has been in existence since 1938." And on and on it goes, for *pages*, talking about Kandor and the Fortress of Solitude and what they say about Modern Man and... yikes... I picked this up to get *away* from comics.

On I plunge to the next essay, "The Return of the Middle Ages." Now this sounds convoluted, right? Yet the very fourth paragraph finds the author in a drugstore buying—gulp—*Savage Sword of Conan*, *Camelot 3000*, *The Elektra Saga* and several others. What is *wrong* with this guy, anyway?

The next essay is entitled "The Gods of the Underworld," which the jacket tells me, is a look at modern burial rites. Deep, I hope. For your pleasure, I quote the opening paragraph:

"In 1938, coming from the pleasant town of Smallville, there arrived in the city of Mertropolis, Clark Kent, alias Superman: and by now, everybody knows everything about him."

GOD HELP ME! I CANNOT ESCAPE THE CURSE OF COMIC BOOKS!

After I had sulked a while, I continued on reading Eco's amusing book, in which high and low culture are frequently cited in the very same breath. (This guy should write for *The Comics Journal*). An essay on wearing blue jeans invokes Freud, Hegel and Oliver Hardy. Scenes from *Casablanca*, *Raiders* and *E.T.* are semiotically analyzed.

On the one hand, it's amusing to see High and Low brought together. I do it myself often enough. Others, naturally, may feel that Bad Culture Drives Out The Good. I mean, does Eco automatically eviscerate his own arguments? How can one compare Plato and The Three Scrooges? Is such a comparison valueless? What is the place of mindless entertainment, after all?

For those who believe that Pop Art, Andy Warhol and John Cage signaled the end of Life As We Know it, one recalls that Bach, Mozart and Debussy (at the very least) were fond of quoting popular songs in their works. And what about "Sweeney agonistes" by Eliot, anyway. Or is that already too late?

Keep those cards and letters coming folks. Remember, send your mini-comics, self-published efforts, esoterica, or anything else that you feel is "cool" and "with it" or just plain "good." Spread the word. That address again: Heidi MacDonald, P.O. Box 691446, West Hollywood, CA 90069. ●

Renegade Releases

#Kazillion July, 1988 — Recomended by 9 out of 10 doctors who *know*. — I Matta

FIFTIES FEAR AND ANXIETY

Suburban Nightmares #1-4
art and story by: Michael Cherkas, Larry Hancock and John van Bruggen
B & W/ 24 pages/ $2.00US;$2.75 CDN

Introducing SUBURBAN NIGHTMARES, our four issue biweekly series by Larry Hancock, Michael Cherkas and John van Bruggen, chronicling the fears and anxieties of 1950's suburban families
Please see flyer

Trypto the Acid Dog

written by: Bill Murray and Jose Ferrer
art by: Steve Leialoha
B & W/24 pages/$2.00US;$2.75CDN

"Some say hero's are no more... that they were born of superstition,folklore and mythology...but from the crimson flames of violence exacted upon the innocent: a hero is born! Trypto the Acid Dog!" Thus begins one of the most bizarre concepts to come into Renegade Press since The Flaming Carrot.

This one shot story is both a tribute and a spoof. Combining Golden Age charm with eighties insanity, Trypto is the tale of a dog's vengence and the triumph of good over evil. Leialoha's art is the surreal touch that brings it all together.

JAIME on Renegade Romance!

Renegade Romance #2
art and stories by various artists (see below)
cover by: Jaime Hernandez
B & W/64 pages/$3.50US;$5.00CDN

This is our second annual collection of romance stories. The last one had plenty of re-orders so be sure to order accordingly as our cover by **Jaime Hernandez** is bound to increase sales potential. Included this issue are the conclusion to **Trina Robbins** "Red Love," "Wedding Day" by **Bob Rozakis** and **Steven DeStefano**. English cartoonist **David Hines** hilarious 8 page story about romance stories in the eighties, "Daydreams" by **Jackie Estrada** and **Barb**(Vickie Valentine) **Rausch**, "Forever Is A Long Long Time" by **Steve Leialoha** and **Deni Loubert**, a new eight page story from Cinc[illegible]ni, and "Schoolgirl" by newcomer **Laurence P. Kamp**. The back cover is by **Lee**(Winmens Comix)**Binswanger**

JULY AT A GLANCE

The Cases of Sherlock Holmes #14	Kilgore #5
Neil the Horse #14	Ms Tree #49
Trypto the Acid Dog	Renegade Romance #2
Suburban Nightmares #1	Suburban Nightmares #3
Suburban Nightmares #2	Suburban Nightmares #4

The Cases of Sherlock Holmes #14
written by: Arthur Conan Doyle
cover and art by: Dan Day
B & W/32 pages/
$2.00US, $2.75CDN

"The Adventure of the Naval Treaty" part two
In this conclusion to the story, we find that if Sherlock Holmes fails to solve the mystery behind "The Adventure of the Naval Treaty," then the British Empire is doomed!

Kilgore #5
art and story by: Brian Chin
B & W/32 pages/$2.00US;$2.75 CDN

How original can you get? An Army guy fighting dinosaurs in a forgotten jungle? When Col. Kigore's in charge, that's plenty original as he spouts off about dinosaurs, politics, and money, in a story as fresh as last year's headlines! Also featuring a bonus tale of admitted guilt called "I, Kilgore."

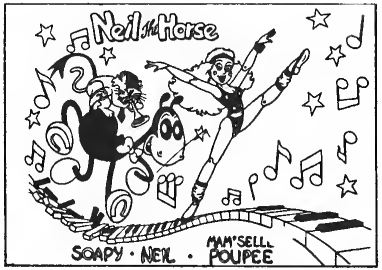
Ms. Tree #49
story by: Max Collins
art by: Terry Beatty and Gary Kato
2-color/32 pages/$2.00US;$2.75CDN

"The Fallen Tree" - part one
This is the first part of a two-issue "death of Ms. Tree" story. A mortal wound sends Ms. Tree reeling into a surreal nightmare world where those she has killed await her! The second part of this story will be #50 (solicited last month) with flexi-disc, so be sure you order plenty for your customers. This book will be getting new customers with the paperback versions coming out in June, so be sure you have enough.

NEIL RETURNS!

Neil the Horse #14
written and drawn by: Arn Saba
cover with assistance from: David Roman
B & W/ 64 pages/ $3.00US, $4.50 in Canada

During the past year and a half, Arn Saba has been busy working on a network Neil the Horse movie for Saturday morning. Now he has finally taken a breather to share with us some older earlier versions of Neil, including the very first Neil story from 1975. This special 64 page issue has lots of story, art, music, and again one of the those gorgeous painted co[illegible]hat had **Neil** nominated for best cover two issues ago.



Superman of Cleveland The Battle for Metropolis

by Steve Webb • Updated by Donald K. Niven

The city bestrides America like a colossus, one foot in the North east, one in the Midwest. Unlike so many old American cities, its downtown never died. Downtown department stores still thrive, three arcades are full of specialty shops. A recently opened Galleria just adds to the bustle of shopping.

It has its ties to Big Steel, so why not the Man of Steel? And yet, the very idea seems absurd on its face. New York City is Metropolis. Everyone knows that. Just look at the Superman movies. The Daily Planet is the *Daily News* and Clark Kent is, well, an Ohio country bumpkin pretty much lost in the Big Apple.

A few dedicated conspirators know otherwise, and by mid-1988 they expect everyone else to know as well. Metropolis, at least the Metropolis that developed as Superman's base of operations when co-creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster wrote and drew the comic books and strip, is really Cleveland.

And Cleveland is alive with Superman.

Superman's local roots are among various subjects addressed in an anthology of essays by a Cleveland publisher last fall. A historical museum in the city's University Circle district had an exhibit of Superman art and memorabilia on display through Feb. 29.

In June, the city hosted a four-day Superman Exposition large enough in scope to house two separate annual fandom conventions within it.

In the meantime, a non-profit group in the city is raising funds for a Superman monument and eventual museum named after Siegel and Shuster.

Their story is part of what motivates Tim Gorman, whose Neverending Battle is a non-profit umbrella group for Cleveland's various Superman activities.

"George Reeves—he was the first Superman I knew," Gorman said, motioning toward a television showing non-stop reruns of the 1953-57 TV series *The Adventures of Superman* in one of two Superman stores operated by Neverending Battle. "I was four, and when I first saw the comics, I thought they were based on the TV series instead of the other way around.

Superman, from *Action Comics* #554.

"One day, I looked up Superman in an encyclopedia, and when I saw he was created in Cleveland, I said, 'Oh, wow.' And the more I got into it, the more I wanted Siegel and Shuster to get their due."

Siegel and Shuster's names now appear on the comics as Superman's creators, but the fact remains that Metropolis, clearly a Great Lakes city in its earliest incarnations, slowly became another name for New York (and a more benign one than Batman's Gotham City).

"We're not really fighting with DC or with anybody," Gorman said of Neverending Battle. "As far as I'm concerned, the later Metropolis *is* New York, but Cleveland is Superman's *birthplace* and we should be *proud* of that."

"DC would even carefully letter 'Metropolis' over 'Cleveland' in the captions when it reprinted the old stories," said Tony Isabella, longtime writer for various comic companies and owner of Cosmic comics in downtown's Euclid Arcade.

Isabella might have been Cleveland's biggest comics fan in the '60s. His name turned up every month in the letter columns of comic books, at the bottom of enthusiastic (let's be frank, Tony, gushy) letters to the editor.

However, during all those years as a fan, Isabella had no idea the genre's greatest hero—American fiction's greatest, even—was created in his back yard.

"Once I knew, I was really proud of it," Isabella said, "but no one ever made a big deal of it."

A series of coincidences changed that. The most important has to do with the city itself—no longer as racked by self-doubt, environmental and financial problems as during the '70s. Actually, a Superman monument in Cleveland was first proposed in 1977—but the city turned a deaf ear at a time when it could really have used the Men of Steel.

That was when columnist Tom Green in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* wrote about a proposal to the Cleveland Area Arts Council to do many of the things the city plans for 1988. Gorman remembered reading the column in 1984, shortly after moving back from Los Angeles.

"I got into this naively, thinking all I would have to do is make the same proposal and then someone would do it," Gorman said. "The first question was who to make the proposal to."

The correct answer turned out to be the city's Convention and Visitors Bureau—who had already recognized how much good publicity the city received when it was named the site for the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame.

By 1985, DC Vice President Paul Levitz gave the company's blessing for a Cleveland celebration during Superman's 50th. Gorman found himself dividing his time between lining up civic support and working out details, including trademark-use permission, with DC.

Neverending Battle hosted a benefit premiere last summer for *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace*, a black-tie event that got much better reviews in the local media than the movie.

The organization has opened two Superman Stores to sell books, t-shirts, toys and such official anniversary merchandise as pretzels in the familiar S-within-a-triangle shield pattern.

Of most interest to collectors, however, is the organization's benefit poster—with verticle images from a telephone booth's perspective. "The Legend Returns" shows Clark Kent rushing into the booth on one side, Superman flying out on the other and such Cleveland landmarks as the Terminal Tower and May Company department store (which is selling the poster) in the background. The art is by Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez and Dick Giordano, with excellent color printing on a heavy slick poster stock.

Like comic specialty shops (and a growing number of general-interest bookstores) across the country, the Superman Store also offers *Superman at Fifty: The Persistence of a Legend*. The book's genesis begins in the '70s. A Cleveland writer named Dennis Dooley spent months researching an article about Siegel and Shuster and their character's Cleveland roots.

"There was almost no information regarding the origin of Superman. I had to do a lot of detective work," Dooley recalled in his office at the Cleveland Foundation, where he handles media relations and grant proposals related to the arts and humanities.

Among other things, Dooley speculated about the basis for the different characterizations. He had three different theories about who Clark Kent was based on and two for Lois Lane. "I was able to find a couple of obscure interviews with them that corroborated a lot of my guesses," Dooley continued, "but it was a frustrating article because of how much I didn't know.

The article planted a seed, however, that bloomed five years later. "I started thinking seriously about a book when I saw the first movie," he said. "It was the moment when Clark Kent comes out of the Daily Planet, sees Lois hanging from a [helicopter] and looks for a place to change. He sees one of those streamlined pay phones and sort of sighs."

Everyone in the theater knew what he was looking for. "I realized he was a part of me even though I hadn't picked up a Superman comic in 35 years," Dooley continued. "But the whole legend was still in my head. Krypton, Lois, Luthor . . ."

Even the phone booth.

The book Dooley had in mind, however, wouldn't become a reality until the fall. Again, a coincidence was involved.

"Over lunch, I mentioned the idea to Diane Tittle, a former colleague," Dooley said. "I didn't know it, but she was thinking about starting a small press at the time and suggested that we do the book together."

So, Tittle's Octavia Press published *Superman at Fifty: The Persistence of a Legend*. Dooley and Cleveland State University English instructor Gary Engle edited the volume, a collection of essays on topics ranging from Superman's Cleveland genesis to his role in the Pop Art movement of the '60s to the nature of his appeal from political, psychological and even religious standpoints.

Dooley said Tittle's interest in the project relates to Octavia's other books, most of which have some local angle. "It was Diane who suggested early on that Gary and I use local writers as our various experts," he said. "I had already asked (DC editor and former Superman writer) Dennis O'Neil to write a piece, but she said we could just note at the end that he had never been to Cleveland."

O'Neil and 30-year Superman artist Curt Swan are named honorary Clevelanders in the introduction. O'Neil was the first contributor Dooley contacted because of another coincidence.

"I was at a party right after getting out of college, and these two guys were there from St. Louis," he recalled. "One of them was Dennis O'Neil, who had just finished a degree in English. We were all talking about what he wanted to do in life, and he said, 'I'm moving to New York so I can write comic books. I want to do Superman.' When I was working on my magazine story a few years later, I wanted to call him for advice, so I called an old girlfriend who knew who to ask where he was. And he was doing exactly what he said he wanted to do."

Gorman, with the perspective of someone who has worked with DC's

Amnesia victim Clark Kent wonders if the costume can help him save the day.

various business people for three years, said Dooley, Tittle and Engle received a good deal of creative leeway from the company specifically because they were doing things right.

"DC will make you jump through hoops to satisfy their requirements," he said, "but they didn't tamper with the book's content. I know the book people were concerned about how DC would react to one essay, that includes the (male) writer admitting having sexual fantasies over Superman. But it was something the rights people were intelligent enough to understand."

The book set the stage for the third coincidence, an exhibition on display through Feb. 29 at the Western Reserve Historical Society museum titled "The Vision of Superman."

The show included Shuster's first rough sketches of the Man of Steel, original artwork for *Action Comics #1*, costumes George Reeves and Christopher Reeve wore playing Superman, an assortment of merchandise from five decades, various samples of Siegel and Shuster's pre-Superman work in the *Glenville Torch* and tapes and videotapes of the Superman radio show and Fleischer Studios cartoon series.

Society public relations director Barbara Herman said the show strayed from the museum's usual fare: A more serious collection of art and arti- facts historically important to the Western Reserve.

"We decided to do a popular exhibit," Herman said. "We didn't know about the anniversary, but once we found out we were delighted."

The museum happens to be only a few blocks from the site of Siegel and Shuster's studio, where the two and several assistants produced stories until the War. The studio is gone now, torn down to build a portion of the Cleveland Clinic.

"The location is a coincidence," she said. "They found studio space that was close to their homes, and the University Circle area borders what used to be two lovely neighborhoods."

(In early 1987, the Cleveland Landmark Commission designated Siegel's boyhood home where the pair first conceived the Man of Steel as an historic landmark. You can drive past the house at 10622 Kimberly Ave., a gray building in a rundown neighborhood. In the front window is a Neverending Battle benefit poster).

Gorman planned to have some version of it on display somewhere convenient to an International Superman Exposition being planned for June 16 through 19 at the Cleveland Convention Center.

The plans were, to say the least, ambitious: a ticker-tape parade to honor Siegel and Shuster was held June 18. Gorman had secured use of Macy's Superman balloon for the event.

Batman gives Superman a real stand-up fight in *The Dark Knight Falls* (DK #4)

Celebrities in the parade included Julius Schwartz, Curt Swan, Mike Barr, Marv Wolfman, George Perez, Harlan Ellison, Larry Niven, Frederik Pohl, Billy Mumy, Majel Barrett, Stan Lee, and Spider-Man and it was to have had over 100 entries, floats, and marching bands.

Superman memorabalia was to be exhibited in the 7,000 square foot Cleveland Convention Center, including toys galore from the last five decades, costumes from both the TV show and the movies, just about every 3-D Superman item made, and in a separate section a gallery of art, representing all major Superman artists, such as Wayne Boring, Al Plastino, Curt Swan, John Byrne, and Jerry Ordway.

There was also going to be an auction to benefit the Neverending Battle Inc. Hosted by Harlan Ellison, the auction was to feature such art as the first pages of *Dark Knight #4*, where Frank Miller's Batman and Superman have their classic battle. Michael T. Gilbert and William Messner-Loebs created pieces specifically for the event. Other art included work by Jerry Ordway, Carl Potts, Mike Vosburg, Matt Feasell, among others.

Other scheduled Exposition guests included Mike Barr, Mike Carlin, Stan Lee, Larry Niven, Harvey Pekar, George Perez, Frederik Pohl, Don Rosa, Marv Wolfman, and others.

Neovention, one of the country's largest gaming conventions, held their seventh annual event at the Cleveland Convention Center as part of the show. So did the 1988 Starfleet National Conference, one of the country's largest Star Trek-fan conventions. Appearances were scheduled by not only Majel Barrett, who played Nurse Christin Chapel on the original *Star Trek* series and Jonathan Frakes, who plays Commander William Riker on *Star Trek: The New Generation*. Much memorabilia was to be on hand. One of the floats in the parade, in fact, will be the original Shuttlecraft *Galileo*, restored from the olf *Star Trek* series.

An assortment of panels and workshops were planned with guest stars from the worlds of comic books, science fiction and motion pictures, covering subjects from collecting, writing, aliens, SDI, and more.

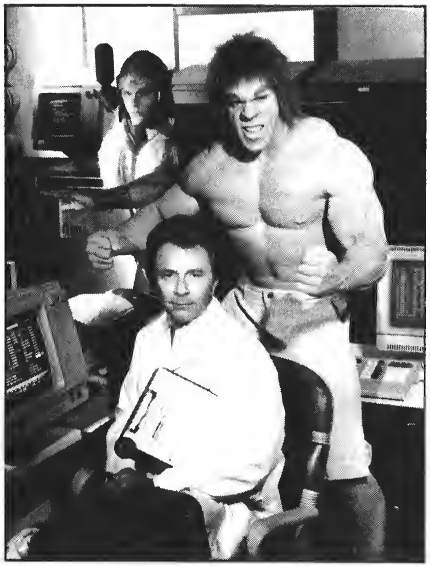
"We have enough meeting rooms that we won't have to cut anyone off either," Isabella said. "That is always an annoying thing at comic conventions, that a really good panel discussion gets interrupted because another discussion is booked into the room an hour earlier. If people want to ask questions for another hour and the guests are willing, they can."

Isabella was in charge of another segment of the Cleveland celebration, a special benefit comic book to raise funds for the Superman monument and Siegel and Shuster museums.

"We're going to reprint the benefit comic Siegel and Shuster did for victims of the Cleveland gas fire in 1944," he said. "Neal Adams is doing the cover. Neal has a greater right to do the cover than anyone else. He was there for Jerry and Joe (in the '70s, pressuring Warner and DC to give them pensions)."

Isabella was hesitant to catalogue all the contributors, but said he and Mike Barr will write the lead story, "about Clark and Lois and Perry returning to Cleveland to visit the Daily Star."

An additional reason he was excited about the benefit is that, although Isabella had written stories for literally dozens of comic titles, neither he nor any other Cleveland writer had written a Superman story since Siegel. ●



Still Green After All These Years

VIDEO views

by Michael Eury

They're ba-a-a-ack!! On Sunday, May 22, 1988, Bill Bixby and Lou Ferrigno burst out of their shared shirts and into millions of American homes in *The Incredible Hulk Returns*, a two-hour NBC television reunion movie.

"Memory lane" department: after scoring a ratings success with its 1977 TV pilot film, *The Incredible Hulk* became a weekly CBS series on March 10, 1978, followed by the airing of eighty episodes before segueing into perpetual syndicated reruns.

For those readers either unfamiliar with or too young to have seen the series, *The Incredible Hulk*'s pilot (available on home video from MCA) featured Bill (*Favorite Martian*, *The Courtship of Eddie's Father*—now, there are two gems!) Bixby as *David* Bruce Banner, a research scientist studying man's potential to tap into his adrenaline-based super-strength. Frustrated after being too weak to save his mate from a fiery automobile crash, Banner soon discovered that *gamma radiation* was the key to this inner power, and doused himself in what should have been a lethal dose of it. Instead of becoming the Incurable Melanoma, he became the Incredible Hulk, giving Bixby the opportunity to act angry and wear painful green contact lenses while allowing bodybuilder Lou Ferrigno the chance to be covered with make-up and spout dialogue like "krrngh" and "aaarrgh."

After that initial transformation, Banner's luck went downhill—he decided to let the public think he was dead as he hopped from town to town, city to city, episode to episode, in an effort to uncover a means of overcoming the raging beast within him. Jack McGee, an abrasive reporter hell-bent on revealing the secret of the Hulk, dogged Banner in his travels, making life unbearable for the troubled scientist. And so went the show for a few seasons.

[*The Incredible Hulk* spawned a number of live-action Marvel Comics-inspired movies and series, including *The Amazing Spider-Man* (see "Video Views" in AH #130), *Doctor Strange*, and *Captain America I* and *II*. Incidentally, CBS-TV had also considered pilots for Sub-Mariner and the Human Torch, but aborted those plans once the Hulk and Spidey's ratings started to sag.]

The Incredible Hulk Returns resumes the chronicles of the life of David Banner, now leading a research team at California's Lambert Institute. Banner has spearheaded the creation of the Gamma Transponder, an invention his peers consider a beneficial tool for science—but what in fact may be Banner's ticket out of Hulkdom.

Enter Don Blake, a student of Banner's, who has tracked down his mentor in an attempt to persuade him to assist with a problem of his own. While on a Norwegian expedition, Blake unearthed the hammer of the Norse god Thor, and inherited as a travelling companion its owner—a "viking" who was banished from entering Valhalla. Blake can summon Thor into physical existence (here, Thor and Blake are two separate beings) by gripping the hammer and calling upon the name of Odin, a peculiar but effective ritual.

Blake verbally subpoenas Thor to prove his story to a noticeably skeptical Banner, and the rowdy viking begins to wreak havoc in Banner's lab—forcing actor Bixby to get huffy, thereby triggering his transformation into the Hulk.

Then, in patented Marvel style, Thor and the Hulk engage in purely gratuitous fisticuffs, nearly wrecking Banner's lab and alerting the public to their presence. Reports of this "battle of giants" wind up in the hands of Jack McGee, who reinitiates his search for the Hulk.

Banner and Blake—and the Hulk and Thor—eventually team up to overpower a group of criminals that attempts to steal the Gamma Transponder for its own evil intentions. Naturally, due to the combined might of these two unlikely super-heroes (and a special effects budget much heftier and more impressive than that of the old TV show's), the good guys save the day. At the end of *The Incredible Hulk Returns*, Blake decides to make the best of his link to Thor, while Banner, being pursued by McGee, leaves town to look for a new cure for his Hulkism and more screenplays for future sequels.

The Incredible Hulk Returns should have quite honestly been titled *Enter Thor*, as it served as a potential pilot for a regular Thor series. At least, that's what the comics press reported, but I curiously noted Thor's absence from television commercials promoting this movie.

TV's Thor is scarcely like the comic book version: here, he's a raucous, rebellious strongman with a noble heart. Thor loves a good brawl, a stiff drink (or twenty), and an evening of carousing with beautiful maidens and other "manly" men . . . he's sort of David Lee Roth and Mr. T rolled into one. Thor's "partying" attitude is best exemplified in this movie's best scene, where Blake takes Thor into a biker bar for a hilarious night on the town.

While comics purists may scoff at the television version of Thor, this characterization works well on the tube, and actor Eric Kramer fashions a caustic but endearing hero you want to see more of. Dissenting fans should imagine how boring a literal translation of comics' Thor would have been—that would have only continued to taint the general public's image of comic books.

While I question Thor's ability to carry a weekly TV series, I'd certainly like to see him return in another movie.

[Fans of Marvel's *real* Thunder God should rent a copy of *Adventures in Babysitting*, available now on videocassette. It's a splendid movie about a teenage girl whose night of babysitting evolves into a comedy of errors—and *terrors*. One of the youthful characters in the film is a devotee of Thor—her room is overrun with Thor posters and memorabilia, and she even wears a plastic winged helmet and carries a toy hammer.]

For some strange reason, the title star of *The Incredible Hulk Returns* has the *smallest* role in the film—go figure. Since TV's Hulk, however, can only grunt and smash, his near-omission from the movie was probably for the best.

A recent report stated *The Incredible Hulk Returns* scored very well in the weekly ratings, landing in the top ten. NBC-TV is interested in more *Hulk* movies, and according to numerous sources, including Bill Bixby, each subsequent entry will also feature a different Marvel Comics super-hero (Captain America, Daredevil, and Doctor Strange seem like safe bets for future appearances). So, it won't be long before the Incredible Hulk returns—again.

THIS 'N' THAT

A few quick notes: Jim Salicrup (the heckuva nice Marvel editor that gave this author his first professional comics scripting gig—thanks, Jim!) has informed me that the *solo* Spider-Man cartoons I discussed in the aforementioned "Video Views" in AH #130 were actually produced in Japan and were *not* a part of NBC's *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends* program. Sorry!

Jeff Nicolson, the talented and pleasingly twisted creator behind Onward Comics' *Ultra Klutz*, has made available a 90-minute videotape called "Onward Video." It's a collection of Jeff's unusual claymations, animated cartoons, music videos, and short films. While the collection is admittedly amateurish in production values, its contents bubble with imagination and fun (and, as readers of my column in AH #142 know, I adamantly support comics and concepts that are *fun*!). Comics fans will particularly enjoy the seven-minute long animated "Justice Chumps" episode, parodying a super-team we all know and love. This tape can be yours for only $20 (postpaid) by writing to: "Onward Video," Onward Comics, P.O. Box 3684, Chico, CA 95927.

Good ol' Gary De Jong, a loyal *Amazing Heroes* reader, has informed me that Old-Time Video (222 Marion Terrace, Ephrata, PA 17522) has produced a videocassette containing *both* the *Adventures of Superboy* and *Superpup* TV pilots I discussed in AH #136, a fact that Old-Time Video representative Jim Nolt confirms. The tape can be yours for $19.95 (plus $2.00 p&h). Also, for those of you reluctant to take a bite at *Superpup*, Stephen M. Russo offers the *Superboy* pilot (which I've finally had the opportunity to screen—it's very reminiscent of the Mort Weisinger-edited *Superboy* comics) for $10.00 (include $3.00 p&h). Contact Stephen at 15 Tuttle Street, Revere, MA 02151-2415.

HEY, KIDS. . .IT'S READER'S POLL TIME!

Comics characters, as most fans realize, are no strangers to the movie and television screen (or I wouldn't have a column to write each month). Some of these film adaptations have proven highly successful; others have sorely flopped.

I'm curious to learn which screen versions of comics *you* think have worked and failed, so (drum roll, please) I'm initiating the first *Amazing Heroes* "Video Views" Reader's Poll!

Reflect, if you will, over the comics-inspired film material you have seen, then answer the following questions:

1) Which TV or movie (live action or animated) version of a comics character was the *best*?
2) Which was the *worst*?

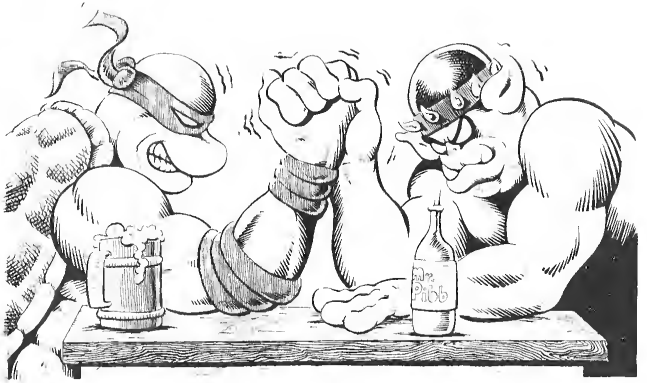
And . . .

3) Which comics character most deserves his or her own live-action movie (and feel free to suggest actors, too)?

Before making your selections for questions #1 and #2, let me remind you of the near-endless properties you have to cull from: *Batman*, *Adventures of Superman*, *Sable*, and even *The Addams Family* are just some of the live-action TV entries eligible; Plastic Man, Spider-Woman, and a host of others have appeared in Saturday morning cartoons; and the silver screen has showcased both movie serials and full-length films starring everyone from Congo Bill to Barbarella. Also, perennial favorites like Superman, Batman, Captain Marvel, Spider-Man, and the Fantastic Four have appeared in numerous screen formats, so, if you choose to list one (or more) of those entries, please be specific.

Send your responses to this poll to: Michael Eury, "Video Views" Poll, 1547 DeKalb Street, Norristown, PA 19401. The deadline for entries is September 30, 1988. I also invite you to include comments in regards to your choices, the best of which will appear in this column, with the results of the poll. ●

Previous page: Bill Bixby (as David Banner), Lou Ferrigno (as The Hulk), and Eric Kramer (as Thor). Below: Jeff Nicholson's *Ultra Klutz* #24.



When Wannabes Can't Be

DOC'S Bookshelf

by Dwight R. Decker

Smashing someone's cherished dreams is never much fun. Especially if you're filled with a sick kind of pity while you're doing it.

Let's call him Freddy, the 20 year-old son of a couple I know. He approached me at a holiday gathering a while back with Something On His Mind. Now, Freddy has some Problems, to say the least. He only barely got through high school because he was hyperactive, and he was currently living at home with his parents and out of work because he was too unstable to keep a job. At this point he was a biker wannabe; he lived for his motorcycle and had gone through a motorcycle repair course although the job he got at a motorcycle shop as a result lasted about three days. At least he was dressed for the part even though his affected toughguy manner clashed badly with the reality of a little boy who had never grown up.

"I hear you've got connections in Hollywood," Freddy said confidentially. "Maybe you can help me."

It is to laugh. My one connection in Hollywood comes from knowing Mark Evanier. But I braced myself. I had a suspicion of what was coming.

"I've got an idea for a TV series," Freddy told me as his enthusiasm began to bubble to the surface. "How can I sell it?"

Why string the kid along with false hopes? I decided honesty was definitely the best policy here. "I can tell you in two words," I replied. "*You can't*."

Honesty may have been a mistake. He got upset. His voice went up the scale into a despairing howl. "But why not? It's a *great* idea for a series!" And he proceeded to tell me all about it, stumbling over himself to get the words out before I could walk away, as if I was his only hope of cracking the big time.

In deference to Freddy's rights as a creator, hopeless though his situation was, I'll change the name and some of the particulars. I think I'm being true to the spirit of his creation, but if anything I may be improving it. We'll call it *Glory Hog* and it was to be about a motorcycle gang recruited by the government to fight crime as undercover agents, with all kinds of nifty hardware and accessories on their bikes. It was *The A-Team* on wheels. *Glory Hog* sounded utterly ridiculous the way he described it, but I will give the kid credit. He had watched enough junk tube to have absorbed all the cliches and conventions. In the hands of professionals working in the business, *Glory Hog* might have actually made it on the air. It was certainly no worse than shows that have shown up on network prime time. After all, *The A-Team* did. Then again, Freddy was so ignorant of the business that he had no idea that "properties" can go through a lot of changes from initial conception to the time they reach the screen. Even if he had sold *Glory Hog*, what actually premiered next fall might have been called *Biker Squad* or *Chopper Force* or whatever was thought to be the most commercial title, with characters eliminated, added, or changed to fit the network's ethnic guidelines, and storylines remodeled in line with the current policy on violence. Or maybe the story editor would think he could "improve" on the idea even at the cost of Freddy's original vision, or some advertiser would be nervous about being identified with outlaw bikers and demand that the characters be all changed to clean-cut teenagers who just do this on weekends, or maybe even some junior producer would feel like he had better change something arbitrarily to let the troops know he was alive and had power. There are a lot of levels of authority in the network chain of command, and every one can demand changes. Reading credits and determining who actually did what is an art in itself, I've learned the hard way that reviewing a TV show and blaming the person listed as the writer for something is likely only to get me an aggrieved letter from said writer claiming that only 40% of his great ideas reached the screen and what I was complaining about was foisted on him by the higher-ups. Freddy knew nothing of any of this—he couldn't realize that the final product might well be unrecognizable assuming he ever did sell his idea.

I tried to explain to Freddy how difficult it is even for working television professionals to sell TV show concepts. A lot of proposals are submitted every year, but only a small

Previous page: a Troll against the merchandising might of a Ninja Turtle. From the *Trollords* sketchbook by Beaderstadt and Fricke. Above: muscling in on Conan music.

fraction are ever made into pilots. Of the pilots, only a few are actually bought and made into a series. It isn't easy even for the *pros*.

I also tried to explain to Freddy that it isn't just *difficult* for an unknown, untrained outsider living far from Los Angeles to sell a show, it's darned near *impossible*. The real hurdle was the fact that he didn't have an agent. It's a fact of life in Hollywood. You can't sell anything, you can't even get anybody to look at it, without submitting it through an agent. The studios don't want to be sued if some show they put on the air coincidentally resembles something sent to them over the transom, and they cover themselves by refusing to consider anything not transmitted to them through recognized, professional channels. Freddy was worried about his idea being stolen by shady producers—well, that's his protection right there. The producers wouldn't look at it long enough to even think about stealing it.

Then, too, you also must have something to show, and Freddy didn't. *Glory Hog* was entirely in his head and he had nothing written down. Remember, Freddy's school career was disastrous and he was close to functionally illiterate. It wasn't just he didn't have a clue as to how proposals and scripts are written, he almost couldn't write, period. His game plan was to walk into a producer's office, recite the *Glory Hog* idea verbally, sell it right then and there, and sign the Standard Rich & Famous Contract the secretary would have drawn up for him by the time he came out.

I did my best to straighten out that tangle of ignorance, but it only seemed to make Freddy more agitated. I was telling him why he couldn't do it and he wanted me to tell him how he could. Finally, he interrupted me by shrilly demanding, "Well, what if I went and saw Marty Robinson at Channel 11? I'll bet *he'd* buy it, huh?"

Freddy left my jaw hanging with that one. Channel 11 is Chicago's PBS station and Marty Robinson is some sort of honcho there, visible on screen mainly during the frequent Beg Weeks. Channel 11 does do some original programming, like *Sneak Previews*, but somehow I just couldn't see them picking up *Glory Hog*. Where would they put it? Between *Masterpiece Theater* and *Nova*?

With rapidly fraying patience, I tried to point out the obvious problems. "Well," Freddy persisted, "they *should* put on a show like *Glory Hog*! They're always wanting money, aren't they? A show like this would bring them a whole new audience! And maybe we could get Harley-Davidson to sponsor the show! They're worried about their Hell's Angels image and this would be a way for them to improve it! People would see bikers doing good deeds every week!"

This was getting loonier by the minute. And what could I really tell him? Go to the library and get some books on the inside workings of the television industry? He could barely read. Learn how to write scripts and put his idea down on paper? He couldn't write, either. Take classes and learn some skill or other to get a job in local TV as a way to get a start in the business? He couldn't keep a job in what he was already trained for. And if I managed to convince him of what he had to do to pull this miracle off—move to Los Angeles, learn the business, get an agent, write a script, and pound pavements until he sold it—I'd just get his parents mad at me for encouraging him to hop on his bike and head west to seek fame and fortune. He was only marginally able to function living at home, and being on his own in a city far, far away would likely destroy him.

But as I talked to him, and in the latter phases of the conversation I was more trying to keep him calm and from throwing a hysterical fit of rage, frustration, and disappointment, it dawned on me what I was doing to him. Here he was, 20-years-old, still living in his room upstairs in his parents' house, still playing the little boy, unemployed, and facing a highly uncertain life with little hope of ever being independent and self-supporting. He was, to put it bluntly, a failure, and he knew it. *Glory Hog* was his last hope of ever amounting to anything. If he could sell *Glory Hog*, he figured, he would be set for life. He would have money. He could move out of his room in his parents' house. He would be successful. He wouldn't be a failure. His parents would be proud of him. People would respect him.

And I was telling him that he couldn't do it. I was telling him that he had better odds buying lottery tickets. No wonder he was close to tears.

Finally, when I was in mid-sentence, he abruptly turned and walked away, trembling and sniffling as he went back to his dreams. The last I heard, he was still out of work and still living at home.

Did I do the right thing? Obviously, some people *do* write scripts for TV shows and sell ideas for series. The stuff on your screen didn't spontaneously generate out of nothing. And it may have been an act of colossal arrogance on my part to arbitrarily decide that the kid didn't have a chance. Miracles *do* happen now and then. Maybe he *could* have sold *Glory Hog*. But it was a one in a million shot since he was so *completely* ignorant of the business, and as far as I could tell, unwilling to learn anything about it and unable to do anything that could accomplish his goals. I thought it was kinder to tell him just how daunting a task he had in front of him.

There are a lot of wannabes in the creative professions. Not just TV and movies but comics as well. For every one success story, there are hundreds of failures. Maybe it's a Darwinian process in which only the strongest and thus presumably the worthiest survive. Harlan Ellison, plagued by more than his share of wannabes pestering him for advice and counsel on How To Make It Big, has gone so far as to argue that anyone who *can* be talked out of trying to be a writer or whatever *should* be—the theory being that the person who can't be discouraged by negative advice and counsel is probably more likely to have the inner fortitude necessary to go the distance. I'm not sure I agree entirely, since it seems to me that people with genuine talent and something worthwhile to say should be helped and encouraged over the rough spots. However, I've also heard enough wannabes of the more hopeless sort crying in their beer about how the world will never know the beauty it has deprived itself of, because of the stories not printed and the songs not sung, all because editors and publishers are blind to true talent or prefer to give undeserved boosts to a few favorites, that I think I understand why Harlan Ellison feels the way he does.

But besides persistence, sheer luck does have a lot to do with it, too—being in the right place at the right time with the right skills and right talent. And the odds can be improved enormously simply by learning as much as you can about the business you're trying to break into.

Some years ago, when I worked on staff for Fantagraphics, I had to answer a letter from a young lady who wanted to know how to go about getting the assignment of writing the musical score for the next *Conan* movie. That isn't really a question I'd think of writing a letter to *The Comics Journal* to get an answer to, but even though it was a field I'm hardly an expert in, I did try to answer it as best I could without being *too* discouraging. What it came down to was that writing scores for movies is a career for a few trained and experienced specialists who are well-known in the business, and an unknown dilettante dabbling in it as a hobby isn't going to get plum assignments. If she wanted to write movie scores, she would have to learn how to write music, go to Hollywood, break into the business at whatever point she could find an opening, learn all she could about the profession, and make a name and reputation until she could get the assignments she wanted. I didn't hear back from her, either. I suspect she was wanting somebody to tell her the magic formula for how to hum a few bars of the music in her head to just the right person in charge, for which she would be paid a lot of money and get screen credit, while some harmless drudge of a professional did 98% of the hard work in elaborating on her Great Idea and actually scoring two hours' worth of movie. Begging the question, of course, of if you have somebody on staff who can do 98% of the work professionally, why not have him do the other 2% as well and spare yourself the headaches of dealing with an inexperienced amateur?

In our own bailiwick, most comics fans have probably toyed with the idea of creating their own comics at one time or another, many as artists but even more as writers. Drawing takes a certain amount of obvious skill, but writing looks so easy that almost anyone of reasonable intelligence can probably take a credible stab at it. And unlike movies, comics seem very forgiving of stilted or unnatural dialogue, poor pacing, cliched plots, cardboard characterization, or any of a dozen other problems bedeviling the amateur. Well, maybe that's just it.

This field has attracted so many fans because comics seem like something that anybody can do. Historically, professional writing standards in comic books have not been terribly much higher than what's done on the amateur level. What consitutes professionalism in this business is too often little more than learning to turn the work in on time (and the surprising thing is how many professionals have trouble with just that much).

It's also a lot easier to "go pro" in comics than in, say, movies or TV, particularly with the explosion of titles and companies in recent years. Writing for movies and TV is a closed shop, if only because too much is at stake when budgets of millions of dollars are involved to let amateurs get their hands on a project. (Why so many movies and TV shows *still* turn out badly is a whole different matter.) Comic-book budgets are on the order of a few thousand dollars, cheap enough that a determined creator can publish a book himself if no one else will.

And what do you know...! Comics can even be a back door into Hollywood. *Sable* and the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* have already reached TV, and hardly a week goes by when some independent comic-book company isn't proudly announcing that a property has been optioned for the movies and by golly, before long we'll be seeing Shannon Tweed playing *Delta Tenn*! While impressive, a property being optioned is still a long way from being produced, and most of the announced options will probably never be made. And unless some genuine hits emerge from the comic-book properties that are produced, even fewer will be made. Still, a comic book is in a way a proposal for a possible production that is something tangible and has even been test-marketed; unlike an original proposal, a comic book has a track record.

Hmm. Maybe that was Freddy's mistake. Instead of trying to sell *Glory Hog* directly as a TV series, maybe he should have worked it up as an independent comic book first. There are black-and-white and even more than a few color titles out there that are based on worse ideas than his. And in a world where *Teenage*

Playboy centerfold Shannon Tweed will play *Delta Tenn*. Will Mark Merderosien write the script? HA!

A visit to Smallville High's 15-year reunion: one of the highpoints of *Superman III*.

Mutant Ninja Turtles has reached the screen and after ten years *Elfquest* still hasn't, who knows? Some producer might have noticed *Glory Hog* and picked it up.

After all, as I've said, *The A-Team* made it to the airwaves. And if *The A-Team* made it, what would stop *Glory Hog*?

Another Look at Supes III. My fellow big-time funnybook columnist, Michael Eury, has pretty well covered the movie *Superman III* and its video release in previous issues of *Amazing Heroes*, and far be it from me to rehash what he has already said so well. However, I did pick up a copy of the laserdisc recently (it was on sale at a handsome discount, making the bite for what is, after all, a fairly terrible film, somewhat more tolerable), and a couple of small points have occured to me.

1. Lois Lane ducks out of things early on in the film (reflecting a real-life dispute between the makers and Margot Kidder), saying she is off to Bermuda. She returns at the end of the film with a story "that will blow the lid off corruption in the Carribean!" That's a good trick, considering Bermuda is out in the Atlantic, several hundred miles due east of Savannah, Georgia, and not exactly close to the Carribean.

2. Internal evidence indicates this film, though released in 1983, is taking place in the year 1980. *Suggests?!* It comes out and *says* it when Clark Kent goes to the 15-year reunion of Smallville High's Class of 1965. Now, the evil Superman was shown causing mischief at that year's Olympic Games. The only problem is, Americans are shown at the Olympics in this movie. If you'll remember, the 1980 Moscow Olympics were the ones we boycotted because of the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. The boycott thoroughly obsoleted the movie *Goldengirl* (which starred Susan Anton as an American athlete scientifically redesigned to deliver superhuman track and field performance), since it was set at the Moscow Olympics, but the makers of that movie at least had the excuse theirs was made before the event (1979) and was a near-term future projection. *Superman III* screws up the near-term past.

Well, I will give it this much. Despite all the movie's problems, Annette O'Toole's performance as a sweet, loving, down-home Lana Lang shone through, making the Margot Kidder version of Lois Lane seem shallow and obnoxious by comparison. If Clark Kent were to say to this Lana Lang, "Uh, Lana, there's, uh, something I really have to, uh, tell you. . . I'm really, uh. . . ," she would gently interrupt with, "You don't have to tell me—I've known that all the time!"

And on this issue's chopping block is *this* comic book. . .

***The Honeymooners* #7**, "On the Ropes", Thomas Edward West and Norman Abramoff, writers; Win Mortimer, penciller; Vince Musacchia, illustrator; Susan Sykes and Ted Camut, colorists; Tim Harkins, letterer; Triad; $2.00.

Get ready to groan because I'm going to discuss wrestling and comics again. Actually, I've had a lot of second thoughts about the gleeful way I "exposed the business" of wrestling back in *Amazing Heroes* #110. I've since come to understand wrestlers as guys just trying to make a living by putting on an entertaining show. Part of their business depends on them at least keeping up the pretense that professional wrestling is a genuine sport. While most thinking adults in this country are perfectly well aware that wrestling is "fixed," the wrestlers themselves are convinced that the segment of the population from which they draw their fans and support must at all costs go on thinking that it's real. True, I can't expose the business any more completely than the World Wrestling Federation did recently when through some production error its newsstand magazine appeared on the stands announcing Randy "Macho Man" Savage as the new WWF champion two weeks *before* Macho Man actually won the belt. But after further reflection, I'm somehow less enthusiastic about actively trying to spoil the fun of those who would prefer to believe it's genuine sports competition or to jeopardize the livelihoods of a group of performers who by all reports have enough problems already.

In any event, the wrestling and comics connection continues with the guest appearance of a real wrestling personality, Captain Lou Albano in issue #7 of *The Honeymooners* comic book. Right away I have to wonder about that standard text in the indicia —you know, the one that claims that "No similarity between any of the characters, persons and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental." Is it a coincidence that the lead characters are drawn to look like Jackie Gleason and Art Carney, to say nothing of Captain Lou? Okay, okay, I realize that the Gleason estate knows about this comic book and Art Carney and Lou Albano gave their permission, and the legalistic boilerplate is really intended to protect the firm from nuisance lawsuits from perfect strangers claiming damages as a result of an accidental and unintended resemblance to characters in the story. The phrasing still seems a little peculiar.

On with the story. One fine day on Chauncey St., Ralph Kramden saves the life of a neighbor boy who was about to be run over by a car. In an expansive mood, Ralph promises to rent a nearby vacant lot so the neighborhood kids have safe place to play instead of on the street, then realizes keeping this promise is going to take a lot of money he doesn't have. However, a bad-guy wrestler called the Turk is offering a thousand dollars to anyone who can defeat him in the ring, and it just so happens the neighbor boy's cousin is none other than Captain Lou Albano. Ralph goes to Albano's gym and begins training as a wrestler to meet the Turk's challenge, and of course numerous complications ensue before the last page is turned. I'll just say that this is an awfully *nice* Ralph Kramden. If the original Jackie Gleason Ralph Kramden had been this kind and lovable instead of being mainly a loud and perpetually frustrated fet man, I might have warmed up to the TV show more than I ever did.

The Honeymooners comic book is of course set in the '50s, so Captain Lou appears as a young man. In a strange bit of irony, he once actually appeared on the *Jackie Gleason Show* during that time period and even wrestled Gleason. The comic book may not be so far from the truth, after all. Where it does veer off from the real world is the portrayal of the wrestling match between Ralph Kramden and the Turk as spontaneous and unrehearsed. Wrestling matches that *are* spontaneous and unrehearsed are not unknown in the business, but are extremely rare because the wrestlers can get hurt, the results are unpredictable, and two guys fighting with each other for real makes for a lousy show. The stunt of an unknown fans out of the audience challenging a name wrestler goes back to at least 1915, but that's as a promoter's prearranged gimmick. I'm less clear on the matter of a wrestler genuinely challenging any and all comers from the audience for a cash prize (you'll remember that Peter Parker took on "Crusher Hogan" in precisely that manner shortly after acquiring his spider-powers in *Amazing Fantasy* #15), but while it may have been done on the county fair circuit in decades past, it isn't done now. Too many problems with insurance and possible lawsuits if somebody gets hurt. This is a rough business and even the trained professionals who know how to take a bump are frequently injured.

Quibbling aside, the book includes an interview with Captain Lou and even a full-page photograph of him (which just makes me glad that in the story he's drawn 30 years younger). Captain Lou is semi-retired from the wrestling game these days, though he makes occasional appearances at small independent shows in the East, and he spends much of this time helping raise funds for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. A postage-paid envelope for contributions is tucked into the comic book for your convenience. (This is really a worthy cause. After seeing what MS did to a classmate of mine from high school, I don't have to be asked twice to send a check. This is for you, Marsha.)

I'm not sure of the division of labor that makes Win Mortimer a penciller and Vince Musacchia an illustrator on the same book, but the end product is an attractive one. Big, simple, uncluttered panels, the principle characters rendered relatively realistically with just enough cartoon exaggeration for effect, Ralph and Norton caricatured recognizably without looking like a succession of photo-swiped portraits from TV stills, full-process painted coloring. It looks good. And don't forget to look for the guest celebrities in the wrestling match audience on the back cover —Joe Palooka, Jiggs (as in Maggie and), Little Annie Fanny, an Antonia Prohias Spy, and even a Don Martin character.

No, I never did like *The Honeymooners* TV show. If I wasn't turned off by Ralph Kramden's blustering, that terrible dreary and dismal two-room apartment, kitchen setting did it. But I do like the comic book and its nicer, kinder Ralph Kramden.

And finally . . . well, admitting to an interest in professional wrestling in print has probably blown whatever credibility I had as a comic book pundit (not, mind you, that the general public sees much difference in cultural level between the two fields). However, I recently did get a call from a comic-book publisher (one of the major minors, I guess you'd call his firm) who confessed to an interest in the grappling game himself and wanted to know where he could go to find what really goes on behind the scenes. It may be a little unfair to say that the newsstand wrestling magazines are all lies, but they do go along with the gag, so to speak. The only publications in the wrestling field that print anything like the actual history and news of it are the fanzines. The undisputed world heavyweight champion of wrestling fanzines is the *Wrestling Observer Newsletter*, ten densely-printed pages *weekly* of genuine, no-nonsense wrestling news. It would be a revelation for anyone interested in wrestling as a branch of show business and well aware that it's anything but an actual sport. If nothing else, you'll learn the rich slang used by wrestlers themselves. *The Wrestling Observer Newsletter* is available in sets of four weekly issues at $5.00 per set from Dave Meltzer, P.O. Box 1228, Campbell, CA 95009-1228. Another worthy fanzine is *Wrestling Forum*, a biweekly little magazine that runs not only the latest news but columns, articles, and features, and offers a variety of opinions in a warm, friendly package. *Wrestling Forum* is $1.50 a copy form Jon Gallagher, Box 65, Knoxville, IL 61448. If wrestling can be enjoyed at all by an intelligent adult, it's probably on the basis of understanding it for what it is and appreciating its carnival buffoonishness anyway. But hey, we all read *comic books* here, don't we? ●

Got a comic book you want reviewed? Even one that *isn't* about wrestling? Dwight R. Decker will at least take a look at it. You can find him as usual renting P.O. Box 2217, Northlake, IL 60164. Please, no questions about how to become a famous *Amazing Heroes* columnist.

Honeymooners #7 by West and Abramoff, writers, and Mortimer and Musacchia, artists: doing things in the comics Ralph and Norton could (would?) never do.

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COMICS in review

by Andy Mangels

Comics in Review Criteria: The comic books reviewed will be critiqued, not only as objectively as possible, but also on their own merits—that is, whether they succeed as a comic book, a melding of words and art to tell a good story—and not by personally critiquing the creators involved.

The grading method relates to what condition a collector would want to keep the comics reviewed, i.e., if a comic is graded "Pristine Mint," it is among the better ones, and should be well cared for. If "Coverless," it probably isn't worth buying, much less keeping.

After finishing my assignments for the *Amazing Heroes Preview Special*, [*last issue—still time to pick it up*] beginning this review column looked like heaven. No more interviews, no more transcribing, no more fighting with lying publicity managers—just "west and welaxation" among the four-color (no, make that black-and-white) comics residing on my review pile. Hey, and I've even got some of the *big* series this time around. What more could an exhausted reviewer want? (Maybe a raise, or a free trip to California, or . . .)

***Racer-X Special* #1, "?"; Fred Schiller, writer; George Booker, pencils; Cygnet Ash, inks; NOW Comics; $3.50.**

The first thing I noticed about this book, besides having no title, was it had no credits. Luckily, I keep the solicitation flyers for different comic companies, and was able to look up what I think is the correct information. NOW might keep a closer watch on mistakes of this nature, especially in a Prestige Format book.

As to the book itself, I had some misgivings about reading it. I never watched *Speed Racer* as a child—although I somehow know the theme song—and thus, have never developed a fondness for the show, or the comic book. Since *Racer-X* is a spin-off from *Speed Racer*, most of the characters and/or their motivations are unfamiliar to me. From NOW's press releases, I gather that *Racer-X* takes one of the characters from *Speed Racer* and transplants him into a new storyline. Whether most of the elements are new or old, the book has not done a very good job of introducing them.

As the book opens, Racer-X is locked in a death struggle with "notorious arms dealer, Shi Talwin." He defeats the man, but refuses to kill him. Driving away from Talwin's house, Racer-X notices a package in his front seat (never shown, only referred to), and bails out just before his car explodes.

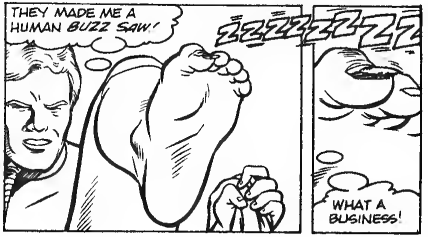
Waking up, Racer-X has no idea who he is. He hitches a ride to the nearest house, which just happens to be next to the estate of Chase Dresden, an "old" nemesis. Dresden is keeping some scientists hostage, and forcing them to build a "Magnetic Combustion" machine, which, apparently has the ability to attract all metal within a few miles.

Eventually Racer-X recovers his memory, and has to find a way to stop Dresden from selling the machine to a moronic Prince Nirdombi.

The art and writing is not bad, but needs a strong editor, and some grasp of graphic continuity. For instance, the story begins in a Japanese-style house, complete with a wizened old Japanese gardener. You would assume the story is set in Japan? Wrong. The next scene takes place at a farm in what appears to be Holland. There is a windmill in the background, the farmers all look like Quakers, and everything has a very (stereotyped) Hollandesque feeling (A small town named Saldestine is mentioned, but I'm not getting out an Atlas to look that one up). Racer-X gets from the first scene to the second one by hitchhiking. From Japan to Holland!? And if the Japanese arms dealer did indeed live in Holland, are we to believe that less than forty miles away lives another worldwide international arms dealer? Come on. This stretches credibility just a tad bit, guys. From there, we go on a plane to Saudi Arabia, all in the course of one evening. Is that possible given the short amount of time involved? I don't know if it is, but it did strain the already stretched credibility a bit more.

Let's look at a few of the other problems. Where does Racer-X get the clothes he wears after his car blows up, and all he has is his super-costume? Why is the "Magnetic Combustion" machine so selective in the metal it attracts, i.e., it doesn't take the mobsters guns, who are in the very same room, but it will take forks from the farm down the hill? Why does it not attract zippers, buttons, or glasses? And what about the amnesia Racer-X gets? Any explosion strong enough to cause amnesia would probably leave its victim with many other

This guy must be heck on shoes: from the flawed *Racer-X Special* #1 from NOW.



injuries. Yet, he walks out of it with nary a scratch. And he's got a buzz-saw toenail?!?! I think I've seen it all now.

These little-but-important details are mainly where Schiller's scripting and plotting suffers. Schiller seems content to use *every* "classic" element of spy/espionage/secret agent fiction, without any sensible bridging elements in between. Even the *James Bond* stories strive to make sense of all the fantastical fights between the hero and his half-a-dozen bizarre protagonists. Schiller does not even seem to attempt that level of coherency. We have a fight scene, then evilbadguy scene. In between, we have a few "command central" scenes thrown in, and lots of bridging elements that make very little sense and come off as complete twaddle.

Booker and Ash's (wasn't that a DC mini-series?) art is workable, but very pedestrian. The characters look more realistic than most comic characters, but they also look much less dynamic. They are static and boring, almost posed, rather than caught in an element of time. Also, any scene with movement tends to consist almost entirely of speed lines, rather than allowing any form of natural movement for whatever the moving object is. By the end of the book, I was so sick of speed lines, I was screaming. Perspective shots (what few there are) are slightly skewed or completely wrong; both artists would do well to learn about vanishing points.

A final note on the art may not even be the artists' faults, Racer-X has one of the uglies t costumes in the history of comics. Even the new costume at the end of the book is unpleasantly derivative of Cyclops.

I understand the last nine pages of the book are supposed to be character files on the participants in the series, but the reader should have some conception of what is going on, *without using these files*.

The book is also supposed to be full-color (it's in the Prestige Format), and, usually, NOW's coloring is aesthetically pleasing. At the very least, you can expect good coloring from this package.

Unfortunately, I don't know what else you can expect to be pleased with regarding *Racer-X*. For a premiere issue—and a 48-page one at that—I was very disappointed with *Racer-X*. If this is representative of the series, I don't think I'll follow it in the future. If I want to read about spies, I'll wait for Mike Grell's *James Bond*.

Sorry guys, but *Racer-X* ran its course and came in at last place.

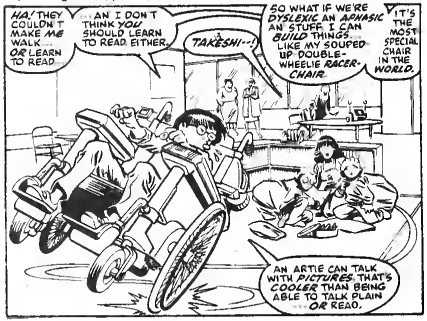
Grade: Good

***The X-Terminators* #1, "Invasion of the Baby-Snatchers"; Louise Simonson, writer; Jon Bogdanove, penciller; Al Williamson and Al Milgrom, inkers; Marvel Comics; $1.00**

This is another four-issue spin-off *X-Men* title—latest in a long line—and the preceding story for the next mutant cross-over, *Inferno*.

X-Terminators stars the kids from *X-Factor*, who find themselves having to rescue two members, Artie and Leech, from the demon S'ym, who plans to launch a war on Earth from Limbo. The story begins as the *X-Factor* kids are split up: Rusty is going to prison for being AWOL from the Navy and refusing to sign the Mutant Registration Act; Skids and Boom-Boom go to the snobbish Phillips Academy; and Artie and Leech are off to another private school.

Louise Simonson has "a firm grip on what makes a kid a 'kid'" from *X-Terminators* #1, Jon Bogdanove, pencils.



Meanwhile, off in Limbo, S'ym has dispatched the demon N'astirh and his N'asteris (that's what it says!) to snatch thirteen power-filled babies from Earth to sacrifice so that he can gain control over Limbo from Illyana (of the *New Mutants*). When the demons mistakenly grab Artie and Leech, one of the schoolmates discovers he is a mutant, and goes off to get the other X-Factor kids to rescue Artie and Leech. Thus the premise of the series.

I'm not wild about the *X-Ad Nauseum* books, but *X-Terminators is* one of the better ones. However, I find this family of books to be incestuous and self-regurgitating. Each of the three (soon to be four) regular X-series constantly refers to the others, while the various interspersed X-mini-series do the same. Perhaps nothing more is needed to prove this than to say that X-Factor appears on page six, and are not even noticed or talked about (excluding an editorial reference to *X-Factor* #1). The reader is just supposed to know who these characters are. The same goes for the X-Factor kids, as well as S'ym (who constantly refers to events in current issues of *New Mutants*). Any new reader who happened to pick up *X-Terminators* and was not steeped in X-lore would be completely lost. Without a previous knowledge of these characters, they make no sense.

It is unfortunate that Marvel seems to ignore their new readers, content to continue winding the noose tighter and tighter around the neck of its current Marvel fandom.

Louise Simonson is a pleasant writer with a firm grasp of the element of what makes a kid a "kid." She captures that exuberance, that mean-spirtedness, that joy, that tragedy, that uncertainty—all of those elements we all had as children.

Despite *X-Terminators*'s grisly concept (sacrificing babies), Simonson plays with as much humor as she can. A particularly vicious parody of William Gaines and EC Comics leads off the issue, and the demon's later definition of what is a baby, is hilarious. It is no wonder the demonettes mistake Artie and Leech for babies. The issue is almost worth buying for these two jokes alone.

The art is not the standard Jon Bogdanove, as he is alternately overpowered by his pair of inkers. Al Williamson turns in one of his most overpowering inking jobs, full of too many lines and blotchy, indistinct black areas. Some of Williamson's pages look as if Joe Sinnott had inked them, except with a clogged brush. After the first few pages, Al Milgrom takes over the inking chores, and manages to make it look as if they *were* a chore. Regular *AH* readers will recall my disdain for Milgrom's art solo, and he doesn't look much better over-powering a decent penciller. I don't know how Milgom looks so good on *Alpha Flight*, yet so bad on everything else he does.

Regardless, Bogdanove and Milgrom put forth a much-too cartoony style for the book, branching into self-parody in some places. The majority of the book looks as it if were drawn for *Not Brand Ecch!!* or *What The?!*.

Despite its art problems and incestuous nature, *X-Terminators* comes off as a fairly entertaining book—solely on the capable shoulders of Louise Simonson. While I do not look forward to most of the *X*-titles, if I were to have a chance to read *X-Terminators* for free, I would. It is not entertaining enough for me to spend my money on, but it is entertaining enough for me to spend my time on. *X*-fanatics won't be disappointed, and will most likely be pleasantly surprised.

But make sure you've got the last two years of *X-Factor*, *New Mutants*, *X-Men*, *Fantastic Four vs. X-Men*, etc., on hand to read along with this issue. You stand an *X*-cellent chance of getting lost otherwise.

Grade: Fine

***The Fist of God* #1, "The Fist of God"; R.A. Jones, writer; Butch Burcham, artist; Eternity Comics; $1.95**

I had one company bitch to me over the phone the other day that all I ever reviewed were Eternity Comics. This company, of course, rarely sent me any of their own books to review. Go figure. Whatever else you can say about Eternity Comics (and you can say a lot), you can't complain about not receiving review copies.

Here's my second chance to review a book by one of my prestigious review predecessors, this time it's R.A. Jones.

As we open the book, we come upon macho he-man Mick Taggert, a man with "burning eyes (which) know no mercy." Taggert fights off a horde of Kurdish assassins in the only... *whey [Kurdish... whey]* he can, before being knocked out. His last conscious thought is, of course, "the memory of the events that brought him to this moment."

We learn about Taggert's sorry life as a World War I vet, and his dangerous first job as a "scumster" soldier-for-hire. He must capture a fair maiden from a Mexican villa—a maiden who had saved his life earlier. Unfortunately, he, the maiden, and the man who hired him are all captured by pirates and... whoops, he's waking up now. End the flashbacks. Leave off at a cliff-hanger. Finish the book with a short, chatty text piece on the genesis of the book. Okay, we're done.

From R.A. Jones and Butch Burcham's *Fist of God* #1: overblown in art and writing.

Sorry if I sound a little caustic about the book, but I was very unimpressed with it. R.A. Jones's writing style is a little over-blown at times, with caption boxes in most all panels, many with multiple boxes. Even Alan Moore doesn't caption this much. Jones seems to feel a need to explain everything, rather than crediting the reader with enough intelligence to figure out some things by themselves.

Jones's dialogue is all right when he uses it, although he does nothing exceptional. It's all tough-guy snarling, even from the women. The plot of the book is nothing new, although the body count should make any slasher/Conan/Wolverine fan orgasmically happy. This book has "he-man" stamped all over it, it is so macho that Sylvester Stallone would be ashamed of his image if he were to read it.

I have always found Burcham's art ugly, although it has gotten better over time. His figures all have much too much bulk: the thinnest of his characters looks like the Hulk. Just look at the cover. This woman has the thighs of death! If her pelvic area and breasts were any larger, she could crush any man with whom she had sex. Taggert has, of course, his shirt unbuttoned to his navel, revealing a massively hairy chest. His arms have twice as many muscles as your average anatomy book, his eyes are constantly shadowed, and he always grits his teeth. Oooh, tough guy.

Burcham desperately needs to lighten up a little. I'm not suggesting he switch to the anorexia of an Art Adams figure, but he could lighten the characters up to... oh, say the size of the Kingpin. Burcham also uses this annoying ink wash style for shading his artwork (when not cross-hatching it to death), which he does not do well at all. His attempts at shading and modelling are to be applauded, but someone should give this boy some Zip-A-Tone® and teach him how to use it.

Fist of God is an unapologetic take-off of the serial and pulp adventures popular during the '40s and '50s. This genre has seen a resurgence with the *Indiana Jones* movies and the subsequent follow-ups, but so far, comics have extricated themselves from following in filmdom's footsteps. While not particularly adverse to this style, I am opposed to something this poorly done being the only example of the genre available. I believe this is only a mini-series, so fans will only have to suffer through it for four months or so, if they should decide to buy it.

Sorry R.A., better luck next time out. And for the previously-named company, I may review a lot of Eternity books, but I don't always give them good reviews. Case in point.

Grade: Poor

***Ace* #1, "In the Days of the Ace Rock and Roll Club"; Eddie Campbell, writer and artist; Harrier/New Wave Comics; $1.95**

Back in *Amazing Heroes* #139, I reviewed Eddie Campbell's *Deadface*, and found it an exceptional book, despite its relatively crude artwork. Such is also the case with the one-shot *Ace* book, although to a slightly lesser extent.

Ace is a look back at England in the 1950s, examining the "Teddy Boys" in particular. The Teddy Boys were thus named because of the Edwardian cut of their coats, and were a kind of mod, hip street gang. Almost everyone in the stories fits into one of the neat classifications set by the Teddy Boys; they are "smoothies, punks, etc." Although Campbell never explicitly states it, I get the idea there might be a hint of autobiography in these stories.

The first story, "Just a Couple of ...," tells of the Teddy Boys as they try to pick up some women. "After You, Shadow" is the second story, in which a Teddy Boy dates a girl, but does not have sex with her. Meanwhile, his best friend has sex with her on the same nights without dating her. The "arrangement" works for a while, until drugs enter the picture. The final story of the issue is "If Monkeys Learn to Fly." It's about a rather promiscious girl who just can't seem to keep herself out of trouble or the confessional booth.

All of these stories were done about ten years ago, and Campbell's craft has grown since then. These are still little gems of storytelling though, slices of a nostalgic life many of us never lived. As Campbell mentions, sex was only the spectre of a forbidden thing, rather than the spectre of AIDS. The casualness with which he approaches the subject of sex is refreshing to the extreme.

In fact, the whole book is refreshingly different. Only some of Fantagraphics's and Kitchen Sink's output (and some of undergrounds) approach this realistic humor-from-life situation present in *Ace*. Campbell produces bridging material between the stories, espousing little bits of wisdom and provoking thoughts. He gives us his thoughts on nostalgia, fear of sex, AIDS, pre-packaged thinking, intellectualism, and the state of reality, all in a diverse and completely entertaining manner.

Campbell's art, curiously, seems better in these older stories than does his current artwork. Maybe "better" is not a good word. Clearer? Cleaner? More mainstream? Is the effectiveness of his stories lost because he uses this different art style, rather than his current scratchy one? No. In my opinion, the fact that the artwork looks more realistic enhances the power and realism behind what he's trying to say.

Ace, like *Deadface* and *Bacchus*, will be extremely hard to find in the United States, since many distributors will not carry overseas comics. I suggest searching to find Campbell's comics. Although as an artist, his work may never be accepted by the mainstream comic crowd, as a writer he consistently (at least from what I've read) ranks in the upper echelon of talent. Campbell is natural and unobtrusive, yet thought-provoking and emotional. This is one man to watch in the future.

In case you hadn't figured it out from the subject matter, *Ace* is for mature readers. And it deserves that banner, not because of forbidden elements, but because it is mature, and treats its audience as such.

Grade: Mint

***Grendel* #21, "The Devil is Conspiratorial"; Matt Wagner, writer; Hannibal King, penciller; Tim Sale, inker; Comico; $1.95**

I would normally recommend *Grendel* without hesitation. It has been one of the first-read books of my stack of comics, and is probably in my top ten. I say "normally" though, because as of this issue, Matt Wagner goes beyond my sense of obscurity and into complete and utter abstract unintelligibility.

Here is as much of a plot synopsis as I can glean: It is October of 2170, and a man named Charlie heads a company, named OBES, which seems to have something to do with the public relations and merchandising of the Grendel persona. When the profits and market shares start to drop, the company decides to assassinate the President and the current Russian leader (?). Charlie doesn't seem to want to go along with plan much, but he doesn't have much of a choice when the rest of the board of directors overrides his decisions.

Did any of that make sense to you? I may be completely wrong, and the plot could have absolutely nothing to do with most of what I just said. I can't tell for sure, because I don't know what the hell is going on!

Okay, I'll take my deep breaths and try not to get so excited. Matt Wagner is continually experimenting with style—both art style and writing style. Most of what he does works; this doesn't. Wagner is to be respected for taking these chances with his styles, and for not letting the popularity of one style overshadow artistic experimentation and integrity. However, I feel that there is a line between artistic integrity and artistic obscurity.

It could be said that Wagner has passed into the realm of "real art" with this issue, as the way most "real art" critics rate a piece of art is by its level of incomprehensibility. Wagner dialogues the story in symbols, sentence fragments, double-entendre scatological references—anything but a normal manner. "Grendel," and his/her/their image is super-imposed over most everything in the issue, as if Grendel pervades the entire lifestyle of Charlie and his co-workers. After reading the word "Grendel" 244 times (yes, I counted!) I was getting a nervous tick whenever I saw the word.

I cannot comment on Wagner's dialogue, storytelling, pacing, plotting, or overall story much more than this, solely because most of these elements are non-existent. The art, by Hannibal King and Tim Sale, is nice—different enough from all of the previous *Grendel* artists to be *individual*, as well as entertaining. The art has a very European flavor to it most of the time; at other times it dips into Frank Miller-esque scenery. It's too bad that for their turn on the book, King and Sale were not given a *story* to illustrate, rather than this random collection of thoughts and panels. Better luck next time out, guys.

As I've said, normally *Grendel* is very high on my list of comics, but this issue is an atrocity of nebulous esoterica. Comico rep Jeff Lang says that the colors (always exceptional) by Joe Matt add a great deal to the story. Unless they add entirely new pages though, I doubt they can save this issue. If this were a few months ago, I would be inclined to think it was an April Fool's joke.

Grade: Good

***Total Eclipse* #1, "Zzed"; Marv Wolfman, writer; Bo Hampton, penciller; Willie Blyberg, inker; Eclipse Comics; $3.95**

Okay, so for those of you who don't know, this year is Eclipse's 10th Anniversary. To celebrate, they are releasing *Total Eclipse*, an intra-company cross-over book featuring as many characters from their various series as possible. The book is written by Marv Wolfman, the man responsible for the first (and some say "best") cross-over series, *Crisis on Infinite Earths*.

Total Eclipse seems to be the story of a man named Zzed. Zzed was born back in the caveman days—during a total eclipse—and gained a bizarre gift/curse, he can never die.

In this first issue, we watch Zzed's frustration through the years until we reach more contemporary times. Unable to kill himself (or be killed) he embarks on a mysterious plan to steal some experimental jets from Nelson Aviation, the company Airboy owns. He comes up against Airboy, Sky Wolf, and Valkyrie, shortly after their brief skirmish with a flock of bogus Black Angels.

Meanwhile, Sgt. Strike and Strike! have called a temporary truce (after their fight in last month's *Special*. (See *AH* #144 for review.), and have met Scott Kida, the Prowler's young protegee, and the real Black Angel. The latter two are involved in Baltimore with some exploding men (!?!), who are after something the Black Angel has, and it is only through the Strikes's interventions that they are stopped.

Again meanwhile, Airboy's old foe Misery discovers something horribly wrong with the universe, and not only is Zzed involved, but so are the various heroes. The New Wave makes a guest-appearance, portending next issue's appearances of the Liberty Project, Aztec Ace, and the post-Alan Moore Miracleman.

Wolfman handles the story deftly and quickly, although he cross-cuts between scenes a little too often. He once again shows an almost uncanny ability to write other creator's characters in entirely the same manner in which the creators themselves would. Wolfman could either be called a great mimic or a meticulous craftsman for his thoroughness in relation to the characters. Either way, Wolfman

Radical: treating the audience as mature in a mature comic. Eddie Campbell's *Ace*.

Matt Wagner's abstract *Grendel* #21 with art with a European flavor by Hannibal King and Tim Sale: an experimant gona awry?

Too many shifts in *Total Eclipse* from Wolfman, Hampton, and Blyberg? It's battar...

In the back-ups. From the "gritty and moody" Prowler story in *TE #* by Tim Truman, art by Brent Anderson and Mike Dringenberg.

seems to be enjoying himself writing this series, and it shows as his enthusiasm carries through in his writing.

Unfortunately, the reader may be less than enthusiastic when they finish the story, due to its lack of focus. Wolfman has three plotlines going at once—the Misery plot, the Zzed plot, and the heroes/disappearing men plot. I can only assume they are all relevant to each other. Even with an assumed relevancy, there is no connecting thread to pull the reader back, no main plot to grip onto, no cliff upon which to hang. By the end of the first issue, I had not been interested enough in any of the three plots to wonder what was going to happen next.

I'm not advocating the introduction of the "big cosmic menace" right away just to set up fight scenes. I am, however, interested in a plot that holds together with a framework of subplots, rather than a sort of interesting-but-tremendously-fragmented jumble of subplots with no main plot in sight.

I was *tremendously* disappointed with Hampton and Blyberg's art, although I can't quite place my reasons. Separately, both artists are good, but together, they are awkward. The anatomy in particular is extremely grotesque in some places, and the depiction of clothing is poor as well. Sgt. Strike looks as pathetic in his skintight Spandex as Scott Kida looks in his bizarre tent-like trenchcoat. The artists seem to have tremendous trouble drawing hands and natural-looking action sequences as well.

Interestingly enough, *Total Eclipse* is a fully-painted book, and it has much more Zip A-Tone® on its pages than most black-and-white books. I guess this shows some forethought on the artists' parts, as even with color, artwork *can* be enhanced by a shaded pattern.

Also in *Total Eclipse* is a ten-page back-up story featuring the Prowler, written by Tim Truman, pencilled by Brent Anderson, and inked by Mike Dringenberg. This is a wonderfully taut little story, perfectly in keeping with *The Prowler*'s mood. The artwork is gritty and moody, and the short plot is more interesting than the plots(s) of the lead story was(were).

Total Eclipse is not a bad effort, although I expected much better work in the artistic department. Wolfman does write captivating and faithful characters, he just doesn't seem to know where to go with them. At any rate, *Total Eclipse* will be worth picking up. IMPORTANT NOTE: If you don't like it, Eclipse will refund your money with "Eclipse Bucks"—coupons for the same amount in other Eclipse merchandise.

Total Eclipse has some good solid writing, fantastic coloring, and a nice new Bill Sienkiewicz cover. And no risks. What a deal.

Grade: Near Mint

***Untouchables* #1, "1"; Hyun-se Lee, writer and artist; Franz Henkel, english scripter; Eastern Comics; .75 cents**

Accompanying a nice letter from Franz Henkel came a copy of the first issue of this weekly comic series. Despite its name, *Untouchables* is not about American gangsters. As a matter of fact, I'm not really clear what it is about, except maybe mutant baseball players?

The book opens with a boy named Haesong practicing his pitching out in the wilds of Korea (?). His father is attacked by a wild boar, and Haesong saves him by beaning the animal with a super-human baseball pitch. The two then begin their travel to the city, illegally hitching a ride on a train. While on it, Haesong reads that his arch-rival has been contracted for the highest payment ever for a baseball player. Not only that, but the man is dating Haesong's old girlfriend!

The two tumble off of the train when a boarding inspector catches up to them, but make their way to the city.

At a pitcher's tryout for another national baseball team, Haesong's father manages to get him in. When the boy lets loose with a fastball that nearly defies reality, the coaches are amazed. Then . . . oh. Whoops, it continued next week.

The story is fairly straight-forward, although it jumps around a little too much. *Untouchables* is apparently the most popular comic (manwha) in Korea, and has been running for quite some time and this series picks up many years into the story, and whereas the story doesn't do a great job of introducing the characters or their respective situations, the editors did include a fairly good "Our Story So Far" introduction box on the inner front cover.

The writing is minimalistic, but realistic for the most part. Because, I assume, the three parts of this first story were taken from different issues of the comic, as they don't connect well, there was some feeling of disjointedness. This could easily have been taken care of with the simplest of caption boxes (on page 16 for example), which does not require any art changes, and it does provide smoother scene transitions—something the book does need if it plans to continue excerpting from already existing stories.

The art is an odd mixture of cartoonish faces and realistic (although extremely thin) bodies. One panel (on page 11) has characters straight out of *Mighty Mouse* or similar cartoons. Hyun-se Lee's art is solid, and he does a good job of expressing speed and motion, all elements important to a comic about sports. Haesong has a perpetual scowl on his face though, it is only in one panel that he actually smiles. He seems to have the most unpleasant disposition this side of the Hulk.

Speaking of unpleasant dispositions, Haesong's father is unpleasant in all facets. He drinks away all of his and Haesong's money, then jokes about it (and is happily forgiven by Haesong!) He is rude, over-excitable, fairly stupid, and easily the least likeable character in the book. Can we just slip ahead to a segment in which he is dispatched to the Betty Ford Clinic, guys?

Untouchables will appeal to sports fans; in future issues the main focus will be on the baseball team Haesong joins. Retailers should market it as such, maybe keeping copies next to their sports cards. As it is the first "sport" comic in ages (I don't count wrestling as a sport), it may sell extremely well to an untapped market. Alternately, it may have an uphill climb in an uninterested market.

If Franz Henkel can add more caption boxes, or get the stories more smoothly paste-together, *Untouchables* could be a comic to watch. With a twenty-page no-ads format, for 75 cents a week, it's as much comic material as a "regular" Marvel or DC book. It will be up to readers to decide if the comic is on par with the best of the "Big Two."

Nice cover, although it had little to do with the interior.

Grade: Fine

***The Golden Amazon* #1, "Twilight World"; Pllip Harbottle, scripter/adaption; Ron Turner, artist; Harrier Comics; $1.95**

This is another one of those nifty little preview booklets from Harrier, made especially for reviewers. Hey, this one even has an editorial targetted directly towards us. Wow!

Anyhow, *The Golden Amazon* is an adaptation of John Russell Fearn's 1950s science fiction series. Apparently 24 novels were published featuring the Golden Amazon, but I've never heard of either the book series, or the writer. Must either be my ignorance of "Golden Age" SF, or he's a British-known writer whose books are not widely available in America. Either way, this story is an adaptation of a very pulpy story, done in a story left behind in comics (and every other medium) long ago.

This issue opens with the Golden Amazon fighting off an alien armada. She tricks them all into flying into the sun, and takes her spaceship off into space to perform some mysterious experiments. Meanwhile, sunspots begin chronically forming on the sun, and Earth's weather is affected. The scientific council of Earth listens to some businessmen who blame Golden Amazon for the sunspots. These same businessmen stand to gain incredible amounts of profit with the underground homes humanity will have to build once the sun loses its heat.

When the Golden Amazon returns to Earth, she is arrested, and sentenced to die floating in an orbitting rocket. She frees herself while in orbit, and crashes into the sea, only to be rescued by Abna, son of the chief scientist on Jupiter. Although Abna professes his interplanetary love for her and offers to help her solve the sunspot problem, the Golden Amazon is more concerned about killing the businessmen responsible for the smear campaign against her.

Korea's most popular comic—*Untouchables*—appealing to any sports fans.

First thing, I gagged almost constantly as I read this book. I cannot believe that science fiction was this bad in the early days. I mean H.G. Wells and Jules Verne and the like wrote exceptional science fiction which does not seem (too) dated, even today, but this stuff is sooo outdated and scientifically incorrect . . . I don't know. It wasn't even laughable. It was pathetic.

[A discussion could be raised here about the difference between science *fiction* and science *fantasy*, but let's leave that for less hectic times.]

I can't compare the script adaptation, having never read the original story, but both dialogue and plot are so blatantly hokey and stilted, that any criticism would be ludicrous. This is one of those books that you can sense the earnestness behind the creator's efforts, but you almost wonder if it was supposed to be funny.

The art is amateurish, ugly, and—once again—dated. Even if the concepts are old, does the artist have to make them look that way? Frankly, the art, and the whole book, look as if they were time-warped out of the forties or fifties. Siegel and Shuster's original Krypton looked light years ahead of the pathetic space concepts in *The Golden Amazon*. I was going to say that at least the artist could draw starfields well, but upon second glance, even those look like chalk dust on an eraser; there are so many stars that space looks white with black stars instead of vice-versa!

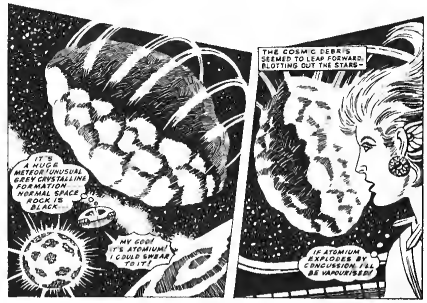
Okay, so maybe moldy, dated, over-used science fiction concepts do have their audience, but I seriously doubt there is much of one. Harrier really blew it on this one. *The Golden Amazon* is more like lead.

Grade: Poor

***New Humans* #6, "Masquerade"; Paul O'Conner, writer; Myke, penciller; Thomas Baxa, inker; Eternity Comics; $1.95**

I've never been impressed with any of the bezillion *Ex-Mutants* spin-offs (What is it with "X" or "Ex" books that inspires so many spin-offs? *[Maybe they think it means multiply 10 "x" 0, still equalling 0.—ED]*), and until this issue, had never given *New Humans* much of a chance. But there's a new creative team this issue, a new storyline, and an overall new feel to the book.

'50s reprint best forgotten? *The Golden Amazon* by Phil Hardbottle and Ron Turner.



For the horny prepubescent boys in the audience: Eternity's *New Humans* #6.

There's still the seemingly obligatory, average *Ex-Mutants* Universe—excuse me, "Shattered Earth Chronicles"—elements in *New Humans*. We have lots of bloody violence, including a kick-in-the-balls scene, lots of tightly-clad women with humongous breasts, more "let's-almost-show-the-nudity-but-stop-at-crotch-level-or-let-the-hair-cover-it" garbage so common in *DNAgents*. It's okay to closely delineate a woman's nipple straining through a spacesuit, but Falwell-forbid we ever show one unclad!

New Humans has a lot of other titillation in it. If one were classifying books for adults vs. adolescents, the "Shattered Earth Chronicle" books would definitely be on the lower age-range of the spectrum. These kind of books give adolescent fantasy a sleazy (sleazier?) name.

Anyhow, the story takes most of the protagonists to an orbitting Soviet space station. There they find a computer, which plans to help save what's left of mankind, although certain "modifications" have been made to its programming. Meanwhile, two of the characters have a sex scene in a conveniently-placed bedroom with a star-port. And back on Earth, we are treated (?) to eight pages of mayhem and violence with Fish and her dog, Chips (aw, ish't it jes da cutest wittle name?). Here we get lots of blown-out guts, a beheading or two, death by jack-hammer, the aformentioned testicle-crunching, and one ripped-off leg. We also find a really strange creature named Sea Horse, who *seems* to have something to do with both storylines.

O'Conner's writing is fairly good given the subject, although his situations are either too convenient, too predictable, or too precious. The plot *did* leave some interesting mysteries to carry on for a few issues. There is an unexciting reference to what could be another spin-off book featuring the "exiles," but I hope that will not be the case.

The art is generally very acceptable. The artists do have a problem drawing breasts that don't quite look correct; they don't match, and they change in size from panel to panel. They are so prominent in *every* panel with anything remotely resembling a woman! Anyhow, Myke does a great dog, and the Sea Horse looks really creepy and disgusting...and original. I don't recall any creature who looks quite like the Sea Horse, and in a medium which has featured as much fantastic imagery as comics has, it's a surprise to find an unfamiliar-looking creature. The cover is by Myke and Jim Palmiotto, and it is a great Art Adams-style piece. Nice job.

New Humans is better than I expected, and if this quality is kept up, it could become the best-selling book of "The Shattered Earth Chronicles." It is however, written and drawn for horny prepubescent boys who think of women as ony a pair of boobs with legs and arms. As such, it is potentially offensive and embarrassing to those past that age and/or stage of development.

Grade: Fine

***The Real Ghostbusters* #1, "Fear-wolf"; James Van Hise, writer; John Tobias and Brian Thomas, artists; NOW Comics; $1.75**

Once again, we have a book with no credits, only this time I don't have any flyers in which to find them. Too bad, because this is a nice little package, and I'd like to give the people responsible some credit. *[Take it easy, Andy. I found it.—KD]*

A continuation of the Saturday-morning cartoon show, based on the popular movie. I don't think the story is an episode adaptation, but I don't know for sure. Regardless, in this premiere issue, the Ghostbusters are called out to stop the ghost of Captain Nemo, who is trashing a restaurant that is using his name. They stop him, but some hippie-like "counter-clock bandits" (apparently from the future) steal the containment cannister, cannister.

That night, the bandits sneak into the Ghostbuster headquarters, and place little mechanisms beside each of the sleeping 'Busters. These mechanisms cause them to dream horribly frightening dreams—without allowing them to wake up. One 'Buster dreams he is facing a closet-ful of anxieties (Holy Binkley!), another dreams he is in a high school of werewolves, another finds himself involved with octopod body-snatchers, and the last one is alone on an Earth where civilization has been destroyed.

This is a two-part story to be concluded in issue #2. Not a great idea for a first issue. But that is my only big complaint. The writing is true to the movies and the cartoons, and the artwork looks directly removed from the TV screen. The writer and artist seem perfectly suited for *The Real Ghostbusters*.

The story is nothing new, as we've seen the "face-your-greatest-fear-in-your-dreams" scene countless times, as well as time-travelling thieves. However, the humor is funny and *gentle*, something unusual for most humor comics. It is familiar stuff, but is served up nice and refreshingly. It's kind of like the pork chops and *Trekker* that I talked about a few review columns ago (this should inspire a new rash of pork chop jokes *[Well Andy, you are just bacon' for it.—KD]*). There are a few good in-jokes for comic and science fiction fans, as well as *Ghostbuster*-ophiles.

I've usually been impressed with NOW's coloring processes, so I would imagine that *The Real Ghostbusters* will have nice coloring. Several special effects are left out of the book, so I assume they will be added in with color-holds, which would fit perfectly.

The Real Ghostbusters is an amusing, fun book that is faithful to both of its parents. If you're a fan of the movie or TV show, or know a kid who is, these would make great presents. Like Eric Shanower's fantastic *OZ* Graphic Novels (and *Shredded Wheat*), *The Real Ghostbusters* acknowledges the kid in us, as well as the adult. But mainly the kid.

Grade: Mint

Quick Note:

Because I usually only review pre-publication photocopies, I rarely comment on colorists of books. Since

Who ya gonna read? NOW's *The Real Ghostbusters* is "an amusing, fun book" faithful to both the movie and the cartoon show.

First has never sent me *Whisper* to review, I never had a chance to mention this item before. However, I am going out of my way to do a short review here for Bruce Timm, who has been coloring *Whisper* for about four isues now. Timm is postively the most vibrant and three-dimensional colorist working in comics—in my opinion. I'm not sure what medium he works in, as sometimes his stuff looks painted, while at other times it looks as if he's working in pastel and/or colored pencils. Whatever he works in, he is fantastic, surpassing Matt Wagner, Julia Lacquement, or Lynn Varley by miles. I would never have thought I would suggest buying a book just for its coloring, but Bruce Timm's work on *Whisper* should not be missed. It is a visual treat. This boy is going to go far.

End Notes:

Special thankyews this issue go to Jeff Lang at Comico, Martin Lock at Harrier, Chris Ulm at Eternity, Steve Saffel at Marvel, Franz Henkel at Eastern, Fred Burke at Eclipse, and Tony Caputo at NOW Comics. They sent 'em, I reviewed 'em, and I'm outta here! ●

This is a roundrobin column. Material for review can be sent to *Amazing Heroes*, 1800 Bridgegate Street, Suite 104, Westlake Village, CA 91361 or, if you'd like Andy to review your material, please mail it directly to: Andy Mangels at 2167 SW Yamhill, Apt. *#6, Portland, OR 97205.*

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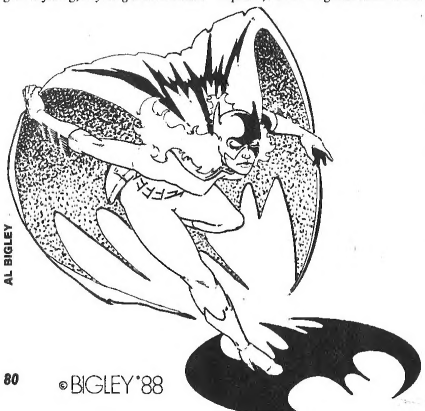
THE PENN
N.S.V. Australia

Down Under Thanks

Kevin, I only recently came across your great mag (#131) in my local comics shop. I was quite impressed to say the least and picked up more older issues on my return. What I find really disturbing is the amount of letters slagging off Marvel. It appears to me that many DC fans are suffering from some sort of inferior complex. A good (bad?) example of this is found on your letters page in issue 130 from someone calling himself "Rich Jones." (sure 'The Penn' isn't exactly a real name, but there's a story behind it). He says and I quote "Of course, you can't find any good writers at Marvel"???? *Are you kidding?* Just because Marvel are the best, people think they can go around slagging them or claiming that they aren't. Don't get me wrong, my comics collection (which is huge considering my age) might mostly be Marvel but I'd give anything, *anything* a fair chance. I own at least one of almost everything DC puts out. And I do collect the two Byrne Superman titles plus the best comics at DC: *Justice League International*. I spend hours at my comic shops checking out the independents and any improvements at DC (Hands up, who thinks *Justice Machine* and the *Southern Squadron* are *hot!*) So, I am *not* biased. This person goes on to say "While Marvel makes *X-Men vs. Avengers* and *Fantastic Four*, DC is making *Legends*, *Watchmen* and *Millennium*." Well, at the time Marvel was doing a bi-weekly (quality) series called *Spellbound* which was *better* than *Millennium*—a poor excuse for a big crossover. *Watchmen* was not by DC at all, they simply published it. Granted: *Mephisto* was even worse than *Secret Wars II*, but if you want to talk about crap mini-series take a look at the 14 (count 'em) 14 mini series that DC is currently flooding the market with. Now I call that "hatching out titles" to stay on top. By the way, I can most probably vouch for all Australian teenagers. We all grew up with DC (black and white reprints). Color originals didn't come till about 10, where Marvel took us by the hand. I have nothing against DC or any independents, I just can't stand their fans who decide Marvel is too popular for them. (No good writers at Marvel—*sheesh!* What do you call the titles of Peter David, David Michelinine, Roger Stern, Mark Gruenwald and Chris Claremont for heavens sake?) Thank you for letting me say my piece and thanks for the superb Todd McFarlane interview.

● *That's the problem with generalizations, you're always going to find someone who finds exceptions to the "rule," even if that, too, is their opinion, like saying someone who doesn't agree with you is a fool, does that mean you're not? I like the idea that if "there's exception to every rule" does that mean that there is a rule without an exception?* —*ED*



RICHARD MORRISEY
Framington, MA

Why Me, Of All People

The question of "continuity" in comics seems to be coming up again in the *AH* letter column (and elsewhere in fandom), and with it, the same tired old argument about "why let continuity interfere with a good story?" The most flagrant example of this is probably Andy Mangels' review of *The Killing Joke* in #137, where he blames (of all people) Alan Moore and Brian Bolland for actually sticking to the established history of The Joker and Batman in their graphic novel. What does Mangels find wrong with the Red Hood gang? Well, it's a "comic book cliche," and wearing a red hood while committing a crime "serves absolutely no purpose." (How about making it difficult or impossible for police or other possible witnesses to recognize you?) Mangels also has trouble with The Joker's skin and hair becoming discolored, causing him to nurse a permanent grievance against Batman for his part in it, comparing it to the Lex Luthor origin written by Jerry Siegel in the early '60s. Well, you wouldn't know it to talk to Marv Wolfman, but not everyone thought *Luthor's* origin was that bad, either . . . nor, for that matter, the very similar origin Stan Lee and Jack Kirby concocted for Dr. Doom a few years later. Some of these storytelling devices may be cliches *now*, but they would never have been used so much if they hadn't had some power in the first place. And to blame Batman and The Joker for being a "stereotyped" costumed hero and villain is like accusing Dashiell Hammett's Continental Op of being a "stereotyped" hard-boiled detective. These characters are among the grand originals everyone *else* imitated . . . and, in the hands of a good writer and artist, there's still a good deal of untapped potential in them.

Indeed, the whole theory behind revising a character's past is shaken when one realizes that Alan Moore, generally acknowledged (by several awards over the last few years) to be the best writer in contemporary comic books, has never *once* resorted to the sort of "but that was *before* the Crisis!" cop-out so beloved by lesser DC writers. To be sure, sometimes he's indicated that previous stories didn't take place in *quite* the way they seemed to at the time (particularly in *Marvelman/Miracleman*, and to a lesser extent in *Swamp Thing*), but he never denied, as so many have, that the previously-published stories took place. Similarly, Moore almost bent over backwards not to contradict anything that had been established about the Batman cast . . . unlike Mangels, he never said that Barbara Gordon was adopted (as stated in a *very* minor bit of *Secret Origins* revisionism that accomplished nothing), but he never said she wasn't, either.

So, too, with The Joker's origin. Moore provided a retelling that was very easily reconcilable with the original version in "The Man Behind the Red Hood" . . . but he left some clearly-deliberate outs for those who didn't feel they could fully accept it. The Joker says to Batman, "I . . . I'm not exactly *sure* what it was. Sometimes I remember it *one* way. Sometimes *another* . . . if I'm going to have a *past*, I'd prefer it to be *multiple choice!*" For myself, I'm quite happy to accept Moore's additions to Bill Finger's original . . . but someone who wants to go along with Finger completely and assume that the Joker was actually the one and only Red Hood is perfectly free to do so. (Take another look at the ringleader of the Red Hood Gang as Boland drew him—doesn't he look and dress very much like The Joker himself? I'm not at all convinced that's coincidence . . . these things, at least in Moore stories, very rarely are). On the other hand, if you're like Mangels and don't care for *any* version of the Red Hood story at all, you don't need to accept *that*, either. Moore's purpose isn't to redo the origin of The Joker or Batman . . . it's to take the characters as he finds them, and explore their personalities and interrelation as they are today.

Indeed, looking at the current state of the comic book field, I'm convinced that all writers should do as Moore does . . . take their characters as they find them and perhaps develop or change them further from *that* point, but *don't* feel compelled to change their past to suit their own purposes. But what, it may be asked, if the writer has some brilliant idea that can't be reconciled with the character as he/she was? Well, if the idea is *that* brilliant, the writer always has the alternative of substituting his own characters, with a different past, for the existing ones, thus making it an even more original concept. This, of course, is what Moore did with his idea for the Charlton characters that turned into *Watchmen* . . . and if the story is one worth telling, it will be accliamed no matter who its main characters are, as *Watchmen* was. Does anyone truly think that if John Byrne had created a new alien hero for his recent DC stories, rather than using Superman, that anyone would have bothered to pay any attention at all?

Incidentally, since I have enough difficulty accepting even *one* Crisis, I totally reject the idea that it hit the DC universe in two waves (as Robert Kowalski claims has been "established," but I've seen no concrete evidence in any DC story . . . statements made by DC editors in private correspondence, or by independently-published indexes, do not count). Between other dimensions (Kowalski is right that Mxyzptlk and/or Mxyztplk shouldn't have been affected), and "pocket universes" (Michael Forrester was right about that being an oxymoron), it can be gotten around as easily as the aging process and other apparent irreconcilables. (Alan Moore once said the only justification he could see for the Crisis was to reconcile DC's convoluted aging processes. So far, I have yet to see any progress in that regard).

If you're still interested in my input on Eclipse, I'll give Neil Gaiman (the new *Miracleman* writer, who's given me the go-ahead to spread his name around) a call when you're ready to do the preview. And for Ten-of-a-Kind, how about science-fiction fans/writers in Julie Schwartz comics? He modelled a number of characters after them; at least two characters he named after SF writers remain in the DC heroic pantheon to this day (Wallace West and Ray Palmer). He also used analogues of A. Hyatt Verrill, Staton A. Coblentz, Forrest J. Ackerman, Harlan Ellison, Lewis Padgett, Isaac Asimov, Kurt Vonnegut, and Eric Frank Russell . . . and those are just the ones I remember off-hand! Interested?

● *Yes, I'll expect it in the mail soon. Now, as to the Red Hood controversy, probably what bothers me most about your criticism is the seemingly automatic assumation that just*

because Alan Moore has been voted the best writer so often that everything he's done has to be without flaw. I know that wasn't exactly what you were saying, that if Mr. Moore handed in a trite, cliched, poorly plotted piece that you would agree, but you must also realize that some people may disagree that The Killing Joke *was not Moore's apex.*

I believe Andy's contention with the subject of the Red Hood was: why did these thieves go find chumps to wear the hood? That "additional anonymity" doesn't wash. (Maybe they were trying to strike fear into the hearts of police?) Unless there was a logical reason, I see Andy's point that no Red Hood version has worked—yet.

And just as matter in passing: upon re-re-reading The Killing Joke, *which I really do like, despite its flaws, I noticed one of the crooks says, in reference to the chemical plant, "you said there was no security," and later he says, "you said there was* no *security." Just a misunderstanding.*

I also agree that writers should change the characters from where they find them, but there is a problem in as much as sometimes they don't have the freedom to do so within the limits of keeping the characters the "same" for promotional purposes. Changing a character, even under the guise of revitalization, is a risk. It may fail miserably and how are going to go back to the old character? Say it's all a dream? Yeah, maybe the Crisis was all a dream of the Psycho-Pirate. Hear Marv Wolfman scream. You try to work with what works, preserving the integrity of the character while stretching him/her as far as you can, as best you can. Moore worked within the "confines" of the pre-Crisis Superman wonderfully. I think J.M. DeMatteis is doing wonders with the old characters in the JLI. *Whereas Mike Barr was able to reveal more of The Batman's past, deepening our familiarity and identification with him by changing a few minor points of past contention. It worked. People accepted it for the most part and the stories were good. In the long run, it's* that *what carries it all?* —KD

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Westland, MI

Excalibur Gouging

I have really had enough of clowns like Brad Munson and Jeff Gelb, and their cynical, sarcastic reviews. I am referring to their review of *Excalibur* in *Amazing Heroes* #135. I am sick of people who bash Mutant books and Marvel because it has become the "in" thing to do. The first half of their "review" was spent not discussing the book in question, but in thrashing Chris Claremont. What Claremont has done previously should have no bearing on a review. It's a shame these gentlemen felt they had to criticize Claremont's earlier work, in order to justify their review of *Excalibur*. A person's work should be judged upon its merits alone, not upon reputation.

When they finally finish satisfying their egos by carping Claremont's work, they get on to talking about *Excalibur*. First, Munson claims Marvel is trying to gouge customers by charging $3.25 for the book. For someone who is a professional writer, this was an idiotic choice of words. Utility companies "gouge" you. You have no choice but to pay their prices or have their services cut off. You cannot gouge somebody on the price of a retail item. It is a customers choice to buy the book or not to. Marvel forced nobody to buy *Excalibur*. In fact, as an employee in a comic book store, I know that sales were probably far lower than they would have been if Marvel would have priced the book at 75 cents or something. Besides, I don't think $3.25 was all that outrageous. It is only 30 cents more than DC charged for *their* prestige format books. And nobody accused DC of gouging customers when they charged $2.95 for *Dark Knight*. Are you going to tell me that this wasn't calculated? A new format, Frank Miller, Batman... They knew it was a hit before it ever hit the shelves. The same goes for the Green Arrow limited series. If not for the success of Dark Knight, it would never have come out in a prestige format.

Frankly I'm astonished *Amazing Heroes* lends itself to such obviously biased opinions. It certainly doesn't speak well of your impartiality. Of course such publications will readily slap a picture of Wolverine on the cover to help sell the issue. Please, get some new reviewers who know what they're talking about.

● *I think what Jeff and Brad were referring to with price gouging is more when a company or manufacturer raises the cost on something that doesn't deserve it. They thought the price was not worth the book, yet if you are a mutant collector, you have to pay for the high price format. If they had been reviewing* The LongBow Hunters *and found it just as wanting in worth, they undoutedly would have accused DC of the same.*

As for their Claremont-bashing, that's their opinion as well. And critics have been comparing creators' new works to old probably since art began. "I like Og's old cave paintings better," I recall one reviewer wrote in the Flintstone Times. *A work being better, worse, or just the same as what a creator has been doing is a fact of criticism, whether it's right or not can be open to debate, but allowing the critics as free a reign as possible is how I work, I handle the grammar, try to point out inconsistencies, redundancies, and personal vendettas when I see 'em. Hey, and your opinion is just as valid. That's why there's a letters' page.* —KD

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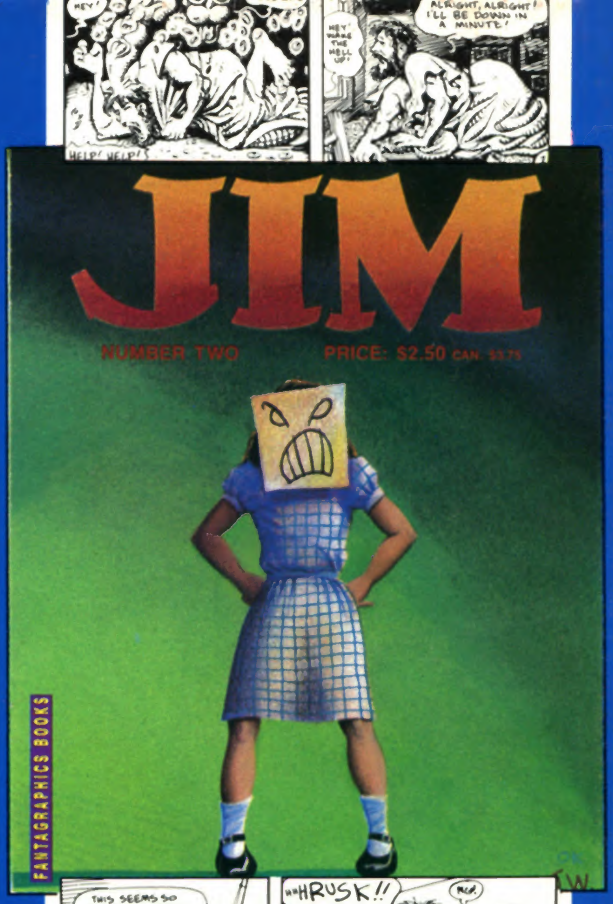
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